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FROM THE EDITOR

Every year about this time, we devote an issue of ***CBG*** to the topic of romance. In a change from earlier issues, our cover story looks at some of the dating challenges presented by 10 of the characters chosen from our two specials: ***100 Sexiest Women in Comics*** and ***100 Baddest Motherf*#!ers in Comics***. (Both are available at ***www.krausebooks.com*** in the Comics and Entertainment category. Normally, they retail for $8.99, but, through the end of January, you can save 15% and get free shipping if you use promotional code COM100.)

Of course, your choice of fantasy date may well differ from ours, as, no doubt, do your choices for the 100 Sexiest and 100 Baddest. You can see some of our choices in the preview on Pages 8 and 9 as well as Patrick Premo's choices in our letters column on Page 49.

What topics along those lines do you and your friends debate and discuss? Let us know at *ohso@krause.com* or via my personal email below, by posting at ***CBGXtra.com***, or by postal mail to ***CBG*** Editorial Dept., 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54945. We look forward to hearing from you.

Looking ahead, it's time to pick your favorites of 2011 and nominate them in the first round of our annual ***CBG*** Fan Awards. Remember, all nominations must have a 2011 copyright date, and creators must have new work published in 2011.

A link to the online ballot will be posted at ***CBGXtra.com*** in early January, or you can send us your choices via mail to the address above. Please, no emails with your nominations. While multiple members of a household are encouraged to vote, we ask that each participant submit his or her own slate of nominees in the categories and limit the nominees to one per category.

The deadline for nominations is March 15. We'll determine the top five nominees in each category and begin the second round of voting in early April.

— Brent Frankenhoff
brent.frankenhoff@fwmedia.com

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tinyurl.com/ycl733k

CBG #1687 March 2012

Cover art by Mark Sparacio and Dave Cockrum

COMICS NEWS!

6 **DREAM DATES — OR DISASTERS?**
by Brent Frankenhoff

8 **100 SEXIEST WOMEN/100 BADDEST MOTHERF*#!ERS: A PREVIEW**

10 **BEAUTIFUL BALLOONS**
edited by Maggie Thompson

42 **AUCTION WATCH & MARKET TRENDS**

46 **CONVENTION CALENDAR**

NOSTALGIA!

16 **ASK MR. SILVER AGE**
by Craig "Mr. Silver Age" Shutt

20 **WHO WAS WHO IN THE FOUR-COLOR FUNNIES**
by Michelle Nolan

COMICS REVIEWS!

12 **DEAR CAPTAIN**
by Andrew "Captain Comics" Smith

24 **TONY'S TIPS**
by Tony Isabella

28 **MAINSTREAM COMICS REVIEWS**

31 **OBLIGATORY FIGHT SCENE**
by John Petty and Jim Johnson

32 **INDEPENDENT COMICS REVIEWS**

36 **TRADE PAPERBACK REVIEWS**

OPINION!

48 **OH, SO?**
Letters from our readers

48 **FOR ART'S SAKE**
by Chris Smigliano

49 **LAST KISS**
by John Lustig

50 **FLASHBACKS**

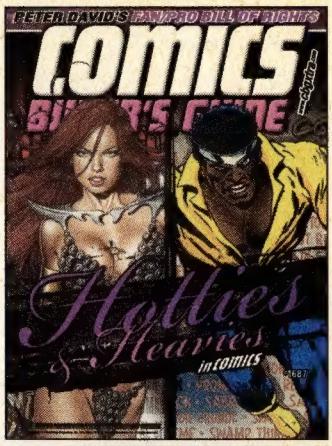
51 **FULL FRONTAL NERDITY**
by Aaron Williams

52 **TONY'S BACK PAGE: IRON MAN**
by Tony Isabella

53 **TOP 10 ROMANTIC ENCOUNTERS**

56 **BUT I DIGRESS**
by Peter David

ABOUT OUR COVER:



Our cover celebrates the gorgeous gals and hunky heroes of comics, as showcased in our two specials: ***100 Sexiest Women in Comics*** and ***100 Baddest Motherf*#!ers in Comics.***

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NEXT ISSUE: COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

- **Spider-Man is 50!** ***CBG*** celebrates a half-century of Marvel's wallcrawler! Shoot a webline and share memories with our columnists!

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Dream dates OR DISASTERS?

by **BRENT FRANKENHOFF**

For our annual romance issue, we considered candidates from our two specials — five from ***100 Sexiest Women in Comics*** and five from ***100 Baddest Motherf*#!ers in Comics***. What challenges would each present for someone interested in a super-relationship?

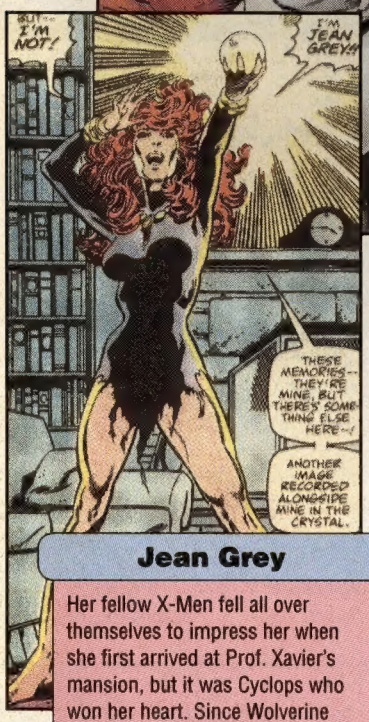
Looking for a date? A mate? Wait ...

Lois Lane

The lifelong reporter may have a new love interest in the rebooted DC Universe, but that doesn't mean she's forgotten Clark Kent completely. Time will tell whether she's still as obsessed with the "S" as she was pre-reboot.

Red Sonja

"She-devil with a sword?" If that sounds like your ideal woman, be warned. She's a fierce fighter who will answer clichéd pick-up lines with cold steel. And we're not even going to go into the complexities of her problems with actually going steady.


I'M NOT!
I'M JEAN GREY!!
THESE MEMORIES-- THEY'RE MINE, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE HERE--!
ANOTHER IMAGE RECORDED ALONGSIDE MINE IN THE CRYSTAL.

Jean Grey

Her fellow X-Men fell all over themselves to impress her when she first arrived at Prof. Xavier's mansion, but it was Cyclops who won her heart. Since Wolverine also finds her alluring, too, it could be a challenging courtship for anyone else.

Wonder Woman

Princess Diana has had her chances at romance with Superman and Batman, among others, but it's Steve Trevor who has held her heart the longest. Considering the evolving nature of her role in the new DC Universe ... Well ... And then there's that lasso ...

Ramona Flowers

Starting with seven jealous evil exes, Ramona presents an almost overwhelming challenge to any would-be suitor. Just ask Scott Pilgrim.

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Hulk

Depending on which personality is dominant, his dates might enjoy an intelligent, attentive conversationalist, a bullying frat boy, or a monosyllabic beast who wrecks the restaurant when his steak is slow in coming.

Doctor Doom

Though he can be an educated and gracious host, Doom could easily turn into a nightmare date, if you mention his mother. Or Reed Richards. Or his despotic rule of Latveria. Or …

Rick Grimes

After losing his wife and baby to The Walking Dead, former sheriff Grimes has devoted himself to his son. Considering the hordes of zombies that you'd have to avoid (not to mention the scarcity of food), a date with Rick would definitely be a test of survival skills.

Sivana

He may not look like much, but he was able to woo *someone* long enough to produce two examples of physical perfection: his daughter Beautia and son Magnificus. (On the other hand, there are also Sivana Jr. and Georgia Sivana.) Who knows what his charms may be? And, of course, he *is* The Rightful Ruler of the Universe …

Batman

Bruce Wayne may project the image of a "love 'em and leave 'em" playboy to protect his secret identity, but he has had a few close relationships in his time — from Julie Madison to Talia al Ghul to Catwoman and beyond. Handsome, powerful, and rich: yes. Faithful? Not so much.

So ... Were we totally off-base? Check out our choices!

100 SEXIEST WOMEN & 100 BADDEST MOTHERF*#!ERS

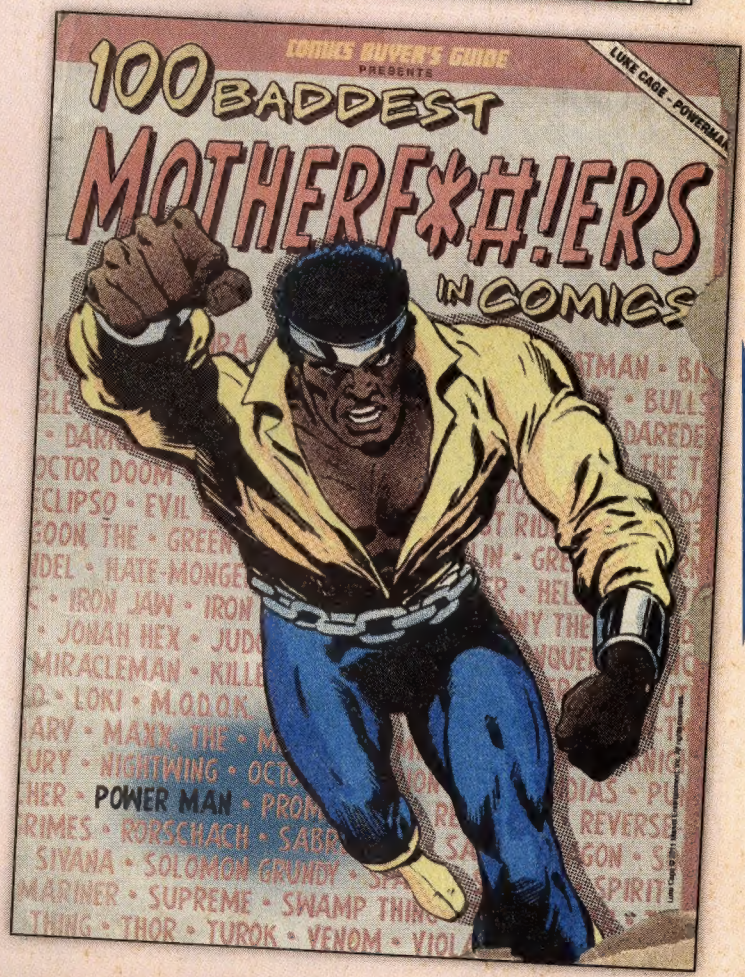
by BRENT FRANKENHOFF

We recently produced a pair of specials on comic books: one focusing on the gorgeous gals, the other on the menacing men.

100 Sexiest Women in Comics
(ISBN: 978-144022988-6) ranks our top picks for four-color females from throughout comics history, from Aspen and Catwoman to Sue Storm and Zatanna. You can check out, not only who's #1, but also how your favorite fared.

100 Baddest Motherf*#!ers in Comics
ISBN: 978-144023050-9) focuses, not only on bad guys, but the bad-asses, the tough guys, and the guys you wouldn't want to make mad. It covers hardbitten heroes and vile villains. Let us know how your picks compare to ours.

Each 64-page book is full color throughout, with at least one large image devoted to every entry. The $8.99 volumes are available through your local comics shop or directly from us at KrauseBooks.com in the Comics and Entertainment category.



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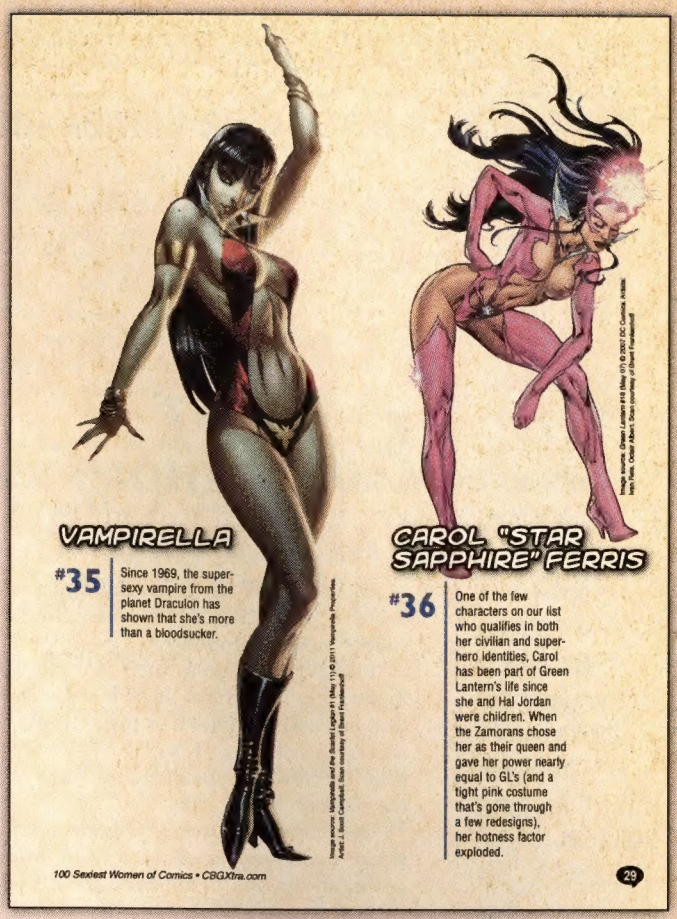
100 Sexiest Women in Comics sample pages

EMMA FROST
#5
Education in many forms has been Emma's trademark since her earliest appearances. Just keep your thoughts to yourself, or detention will be the least of your worries.
12
Comics Buyer's Guide Presents:


VAMPIRELLA
#35
Since 1969, the super-sexy vampire from the planet Draculon has shown that she's more than a bloodsucker.
CAROL "STAR SAPPHIRE" FERRIS
#36
One of the few characters on our list who qualifies in both her civilian and super-hero identities, Carol has been part of Green Lantern's life since she and Hal Jordan were children. When the Zamorans chose her as their queen and gave her power nearly equal to GL's (and a tight pink costume that's gone through a few redesigns), her hotness factor exploded.
100 Sexiest Women of Comics • CBGXtra.com
29

What's that? We ranked Vampirella at only #35? What's *your* list like?

100 Baddest Mother#!ers in Comics* sample pages

4 THE JOKER
The Clown Prince of Crime's victims can only manage to smile at their fate, after The Joker unleashes his special gas. It's a weapon with which he's killed thousands in the course of his nefarious schemes. He's pointed out to The Caped Crusader that, if the Joker didn't exist, neither would Batman. He might be right.
AHAHA
8 100 Baddest Mother*#!ers

31 JUDGE DREDD
He is the law in Mega-City One — and has been for more than 30 years. Dredd is the ultimate judge, jury, and (when he deems appropriate) executioner. His adventures are legendary, as is his ability to overcome enemies ranging from Mean Machine Angel to Judge Death.
32 DARKNESS
Mob hitman Jackie Estacado adds to his arsenal when he turns 21 and unleashes the power of an ancient shadow soul. His new powers include creating shapes and entities as needed; an improvement from the tools he previously used to whack his enemies.
CBGXtra.com
29

First comes love, then comes marriage, then ...

When collectors settle down

(edited) by **MAGGIE THOMPSON**

ARE SPIDER BITES THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE?

Elizabeth Slaughter introduced her *CBG* column, "The Bitter Half," in April 1983. In it, she focused on the challenges that occur when fan and non-fan unite.

By the time I had been married a while, it occurred to me that my husband took comic-book collecting very seriously.

I quickly learned to tune him out when he read to me from the letters page of every comic book that entered the house. A few well-placed words of encouragement, such as "Oh?" "Really?" and "Isn't that interesting!" placated his desire to include me in his passion for comics.

Of course, this made conversations rather one-sided, and I was, finally, forced to draw the line when he began reading to me through the bathroom door.

And it took a while to realize that listening to the origin of Spider-Man was an endearment. When *I* was bitten by a spider I had to have allergy shots.

But, all in all, conversations that centered on comics, no matter how one-sided, symbolized togetherness.

Gradually, I began to hunger for other topics of conversation. I suspected that my husband took comics much too seriously. News of a favored artist being fired could send him into a rage that lasted for weeks. I tried to channel conversations in other directions.

"A giant meteor crashed through the ceiling this morning and caused $3,000 worth of damage to the back bedroom." Any subject was worth a try.

"Who cares?" My husband remorsefully replied. "Captain Marvel is dying."

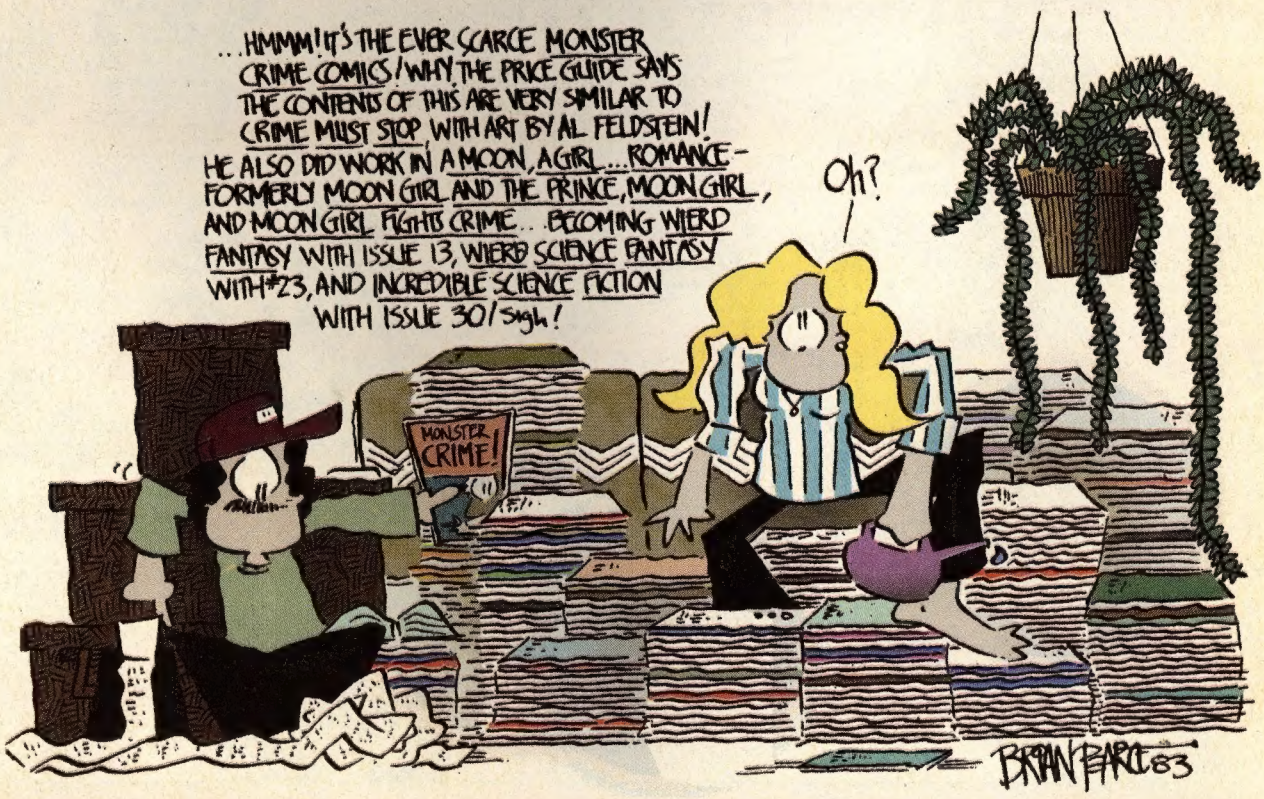
The situation was worse than I had thought. I desperately needed to divert his attention from comics.

There appeared to be three alternatives.

I could buy a Wonder Woman costume, go on a diet, join a health club, and dye my hair. I could study comics, become more interested in his hobby, and risk catching his madness. Or — I could be sneaky.

The last alternative appealed to me the most.

I spent weeks thinking of ways to fight fire with fire. I would have to come up with a plan that was spectacular and to the point. The easiest way would be


...HMMM! IT'S THE EVER SCARCE MONSTER CRIME COMICS! WHY THE PRICE GUIDE SAYS THE CONTENTS OF THIS ARE VERY SIMILAR TO CRIME MUST STOP WITH ART BY AL FELDSTEIN! HE ALSO DID WORK IN A MOON, A GIRL ... ROMANCE - FORMERLY MOON GIRL AND THE PRINCE, MOON GIRL, AND MOON GIRL FIGHTS CRIME... BECOMING WIERD FANTASY WITH ISSUE 13, WIERD SCIENCE FANTASY WITH #23, AND INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION WITH ISSUE 30! Sigh!
Oh?
MONSTER CRIME!
BRIAN BARC '83

to have a plan that involved comic books. That way, I would be assured that his attention would not wander.

I became obsessed with the idea. I smiled; I feigned interest in comics; I let him send flowers to Captain Marvel's funeral, anything, lest he suspect my plan. The plan formed suddenly, fully complete in every detail. While looking for a *Swamp Thing* to replace the one that had been in an advantageous location when the puppy needed a newspaper, I found the answer. I entered a small used-book store that carried used comics.

There were stacks and stacks of comics with tears, folds, rips, and no covers. All of those wonderfully mutilated comics at two for a dime. I bought $12 worth. I owned 240 fantastically useless comic books. They were all mine, and I could do anything I pleased with them. The possibilities were staggering.

At precisely 5 p.m., I stood poised in the front yard. The 240 dilapidated comics were in a jumbled pile beside me. At 5:10 p.m., I poured lighter fluid on the comics. At 5:15 p.m., my husband pulled into the driveway. A flick of a kitchen match, and the comics burst into glorious flame.

I have learned something very important about the character of comics collectors. The doctor said that I should regain full use of my arm.

— By Elizabeth Slaughter
***— Comics Buyer's Guide* #492 (Apr 22, 1983)**

IN SPRING, A YOUNG FAN'S FANCY TURNS

In the spring, with the first warm days, my husband's thoughts turn to the new Price Guide and the reorganization of his collection.

Hours are spent wondering aloud if The X-Men have gone up in value, if any comic book is worth thousands of dollars more this year, or if the really crummy ones should be traded away for something else.

It has been my experience that all comic-book collectors become inarticulate without this book. All conversations start with "Wait, I'll get my Price Guide." I find it much simpler to hand him the book first and then ask if he's paid the gas bill.

But after long, gray days of listening to the exploits of Master of Kung Fu and Cerebus the Aardvark, I'm tired. My thoughts turn instinctively to the quiet of a summer garden and revenge.

Where my thoughts are on plump vegetables and freshly plowed dirt, the beautiful sunshine-filled days inspire my husband to reread every comic book that has been purchased in the last year or two.

After the comics are read for the second time, they are carefully placed in plastic bags. These are not ordinary plastic bags. *These* plastic bags can only be produced in a state 1,800 miles away and shipped in the slowest, most expensive manner. Silly me, I would have put a couple of hundred at a time in garbage bags.

After the comics are wrapped in this specially formulated plastic, they are arranged in order by company, title, and number.

This assures my husband that he can find the right copy when he cares to reread it for the third and fourth time or when it is time to "re-organize the entire collection."

This process takes every square inch of living-room floor, and the comics cannot be moved until the last one is placed in order. This usually takes several weeks and results in a squabble for floor space: flats and pots of seedlings vying for equal space. (I have discovered that a casual watering technique enhances the odds in favor of the plants.)

With the comics individually plasticized and in order, they are ready for packing in specially sized and formulated cardboard boxes. Fortunately, the scientists of Krypton developed cardboard that does not give off noxious fumes. Equally fortunate is the fact that they take Visa and MasterCard. And, of course, they use the same freight carrier as the plastic-bag producers.

As the flurry of spring work winds down and the last box of comics is placed in a hermetically sealed closet (to be opened when our youngest child is 21) and the last little seedling is transplanted in the garden, we speak.

"I read that Marvel is going to put out some new titles," he started.

"That's nice." I smiled benignly. "I read that newspaper mulch is good for the garden."

"You know, I could have sworn that I had more comics than I packed this year," he continued. He looked slightly puzzled.

"Oh?" I smiled again. "I think I'll go hoe the green beans."

— By Elizabeth Slaughter
***— Comics Buyer's Guide* #497 (May 27, 1983)**

THIS EXPLAINS EVERYTHING! IT SAYS HERE THAT SPIDER-MAN ONLY MET SUPERMAN ON EARTH SHAZAM! ... NOT ON EARTH PRIME!
CHUCK FIALA '83

We loved Elizabeth's take on the yin-yang world of collectors married to non-collectors. And, for that matter, the opportunities she afforded cartoonists Chuck Fiala and Brian Pearce to focus on the same topic.

Where is Elizabeth Slaughter these days? Did her husband's collection survive?

We'd love to hear from her!

CHECK OUT MORE ONLINE!

We've posted another of Elizabeth's vintage columns online!

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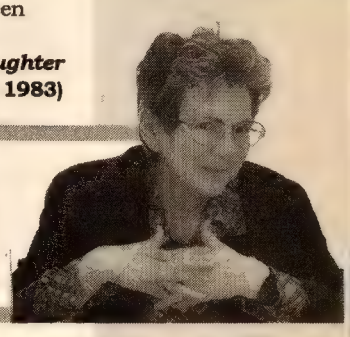


MAGGIE THOMPSON began to think about these columns — still so true to life after more than a quarter of a century — when editorial meetings focused on the topic of this issue of CBG. How has *your* life as a collector influenced the people who share your lives? If you married, was it to another fan? A non-fan? Or a collector with *different* interests? How did you handle it? Tell us via *CBGXtra.com* or *Oh, So?* Maggie's website is *www.maggiethompson.com*, and she Tweets as *ThompsonMaggie*.

More depth and breadth

The growth of reprints

by **ANDREW "CAPTAIN COMICS" SMITH**

I've written before about the Golden Age of Reprints, and I'm about to do so again — because it's grown deeper and wider.

And, wouldn't you know it, a recent arrival squares neatly with this month's romance theme: Michael Barston's *Agonizing Love: The Golden Era of Romance Comics* (Harper Design, $29.99).

Let's be clear right off the bat: *Agonizing Love* presents no threat to Michelle Nolan's *Love on the Racks: A History of American Romance Comics* (2008, McFarland & Co.). Nolan, a ***CBG*** contributor, has set the bar insurmountably high for comprehensive lists and analysis. *Racks* is the gold standard for historical works on romance comics and is in no danger of losing the crown any time soon.

In fact, Barston admits early in his book, "It would seem there are about 5,500 issues I still need to make any claim to thorough knowledge of this delightful genre." Which is not to say the book doesn't have its charms. Barston has a light writing style that occasionally elicits a smile, and his organization is clever. He arranges his reprints in five sections by content: "Bliss," "Jealousy and Revenge," "Despair," "Marriage Hell," and "Class Struggles." This arrangement is not only amusing, but it also demonstrates the repetitive nature of these stories, which followed predictable patterns.

That brings me to my own "love confession": I confess that I remain curious about romance comics, because I *still* don't understand them. What was the appeal? Perhaps, if I had been female in the 1950s, it would be obvious, but, lacking that advantage, I can only try to absorb as many of these books as I can in the hopes that I will develop a gestalt of the era, the social mores, and whatever forbidden thrill these books conveyed.

Which doesn't mean I don't enjoy reading old romance comics. I do. But not for the reasons they were created; I find the outdated gender roles and overwrought dialogue hilarious (which this book emphasizes). And, of course, I'm interested from a purely historical perspective.

So that's three reasons for me to read the stories reprinted in this book. If you share them, *Agonizing Love* might be for you.

Coincidentally, *Agonizing Love* has a Jack Kirby romance-comic illustration on its cover, which will soon have competition. Fantagraphics is publishing *Young Romance: The Best of Simon & Kirby's Romance Comics* ($29.99), which reprints 21 such stories as selected by animation artist Michael Gagné.

Meanwhile, I'm merrily plowing my way through all the *Marvel Masterworks, Marvel Essentials, DC Archives, DC Chronicles,* and *DC Showcase* collections. And I don't mean Silver Age and Bronze Age stuff.

Oh, I love that material. But, frankly, I already own it in various formats. And, if I didn't, it can be had cheap, even as back issues of regular-sized comic books (see: *Marvel Tales*). No, that stuff is dime-a-dozen.

What excites me is the material from the 1940s and 1950s.

When I started collecting comics in the 1960s, back issues from those mysterious decades were already out of my price range and, of course, are even *more* pricey today. So it's been a decades-long dream of mine to read that material someday, and, lo, the Big Two have answered my prayers.

DC has already finished reprinting all of the Doctor Fate and Justice Society stories from the 1940s, although I haven't seen many other Golden Age collections lately. I won't mind *too* much as long as they continue archiving Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman, which they are (slowly). Meanwhile, Marvel just finished the *All-Winners* run (with volume 4) and is plugging away on other Golden Age titles, from the major (*Marvel Mystery Comics, Captain America*) to the minor (*Young Allies, U.S.A. Comics*).

DC is hit and miss when it comes to 1950s comics, and I've snatched up what it's offered: *Mad Archives, Atomic Knights, Viking Prince,* some Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen here and there.

But Marvel is going great guns. As you'd expect,

it's archiving titles that lasted into the Silver Age as fast as it can, with *Marvel Masterworks: Atlas Era Journey into Mystery, Strange Tales, Tales of Suspense,* and *Tales to Astonish* all nearing the end of their pre-super-hero runs. To my delight, Marvel has also reprinted the entire 1950s runs of *Captain America, Black Knight, Human Torch, Marvel Boy, Sub-Mariner,* and *Yellow Claw,* plus the complete *Amazing Adult Fantasy* and *Menace.* It's already begun experimenting with war books, Westerns, jungle titles, and the impossible-to-pigeonhole *Venus,* which it can't reprint fast enough to suit me.

Meanwhile, publishers without 70-year histories are finding ways to cash in on the reprint boom.

One of the biggest players is Dark Horse, which has cut deals with companies that *were* around decades ago and is aggressively reprinting their best stuff. DH has already collected complete runs of Gold Key's *Dr. Solar, Magnus,* and *Mighty Samson*; Sparks' *Green Lama*; Dell's *Brain Boy*; and ACG's *Herbie*, Magicman (from *Forbidden Worlds*), and Nemesis (*Adventures into the Unknown*).

And it's banging away on Gold Key's *Brothers of the Spear, Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery, Dagar the Invincible, Doctor Spektor,* and *Space Family Robinson,* plus Dell's *Tarzan* and *Turok, Son of Stone.* It's also grinding away on Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* (Dynamite is doing *Vampirella*), everybody's *Flash Gordon,* plus the amazing *Archie Archives,* reprinting all of the Riverdale gang's adventures chronologically. And, as if that weren't enough, the *Crime Does Not Pay Archives* begins in April!

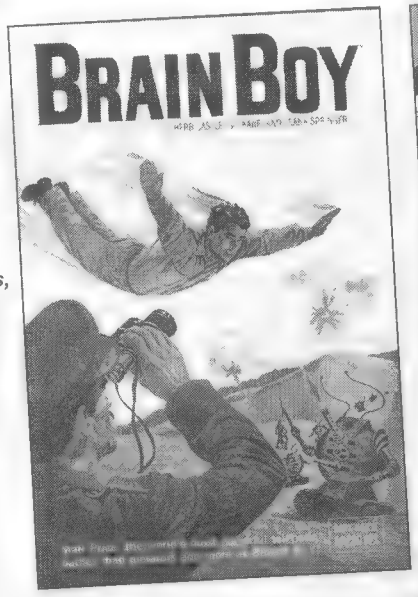
IDW and comics historian Craig Yoe have combined to collect the work of early horror artists; so far, they've done Dick Briefer and Bob Powell, with Basil Wolverton in the works. Dynamite has collected the first six issues of the Golden Age *Green Hornet.* Hermes Press seems to have snagged a chunk of Gold Key's licensed TV adventure series, reprinting that publisher's runs of *Dark Shadows, Land of the Giants, My Favorite Martian, Time Tunnel,* and *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea.*

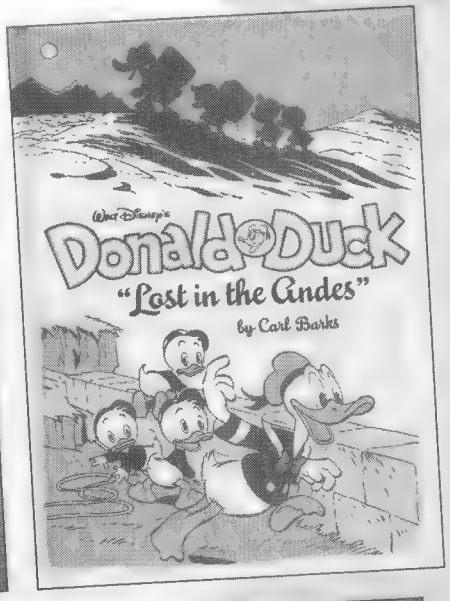
Fantagraphics deserves its own paragraph, just to highlight the favor it's doing us all: The Carl Barks Library, which began a few months ago with *Walt Disney's Donald Duck: "Lost in the Andes."* It's also reprinting Floyd Gottfredson's *Mickey Mouse* work. And it's putting together collections of artists rather than titles, with *Setting the Standard: Comics by Alex Toth 1952-54,* and Blake Bell's Steve Ditko and Bill Everett archives.

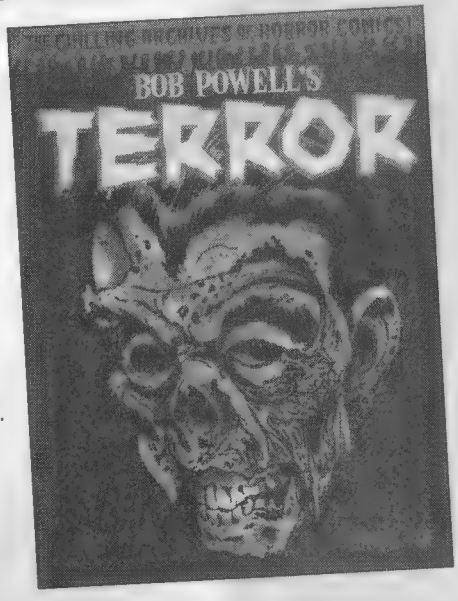
You'll note that only occasionally have I cluttered this list with an opinion. You can tell I'm thrilled with the *Archie Archives,* for example, and grateful for the Carl Barks Library. But a lot of this material I don't have much to say about because ... well, it's awful.

That may seem like an odd thing to say when I'm devoting an entire column to the subject. Especially when I've admitted I'm buying all these things.

But a lot of 1940s material is just plain old drek (I'm looking at you, *Daring Mystery*). A lot of post-Code 1950s material is just now being reprinted because it wasn't any good the first time around, and time has done it no favors. Even some 1960s material, such as the first volumes of *Dark Shadows* and *Space Family Robinson,* are almost unreadable.







However, I accept that as the price for gaining a comprehensive understanding of our little hobby. It's fascinating to understand, for example, that at the same time Mac Raboy was setting new standards with *Green Lama, U.S.A. Comics* was setting new lows. It's eye-opening to see all the places Jack Kirby showed up (and how much better he was than his contemporaries). It's engrossing to see how an artist like Syd Shores goes from *Captain America* in the 1940s to ... well, *Captain America* in the 1960s.

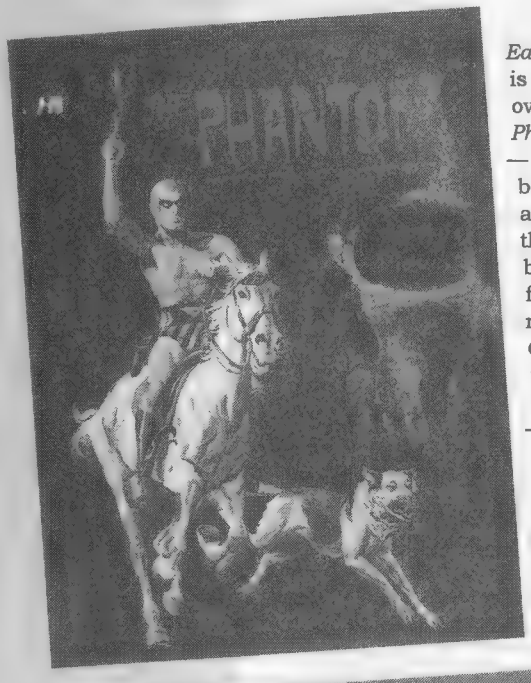
Seriously, even the worst material is educational to some degree. It's all part of our heritage, and I accept that the bad comes with the good and is instructive in its own way. So I spend a lot of money embracing good and bad both.

I also spend a lot of money on the flood of comic-strip collections, which — for the most part — need no apologies. I don't have room to list them all, but here are my favorites:

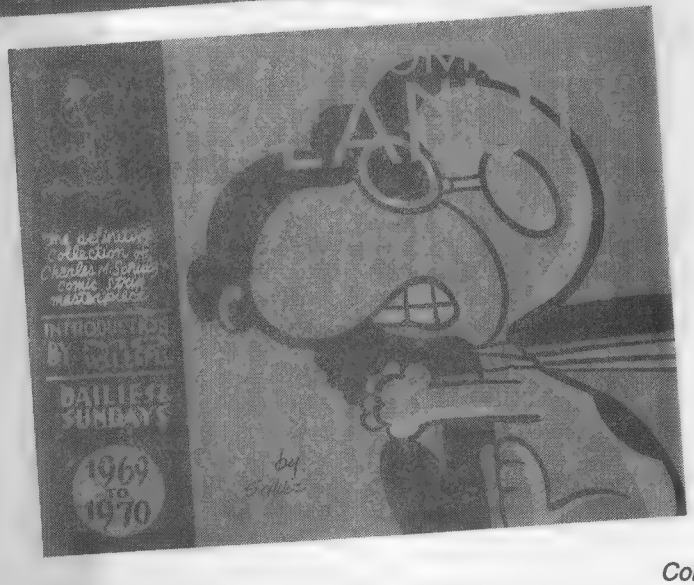
• *Forever Nuts*: This series from NBM Publishing has produced three hardbacks reprinting the earliest *Mutt & Jeff, Happy Hooligan,* and *Bringing up Father.* I enjoyed them all, for historical reasons if nothing else, but *Bringing up Father* was a revelation. For a strip with one central joke — Maggie beaning Jiggs with a rolling pin — George McManus kept the strip fresh and exciting day after day. And the art! While Jiggs remained a cartoon, McManus' women were drawn in photo-realistic style and beautifully modeled the elaborate fashions of the time. All of

this took place in a meticulously rendered Art Deco milieu that is a joy to behold.

• *Blondie*: I've never taken a survey but I imagine not many people are aware that the long-running *Blondie* strip had Roaring '20s origins. In the beginning, Dagwood was from a filthy-rich family, with a robber baron for a father, while Blondie was from a poor family and dressed in flapper fashions. The crux of the strip was the efforts by Dagwood's snooty parents to prevent him marrying Blondie, whom they regarded as blue-collar trash. This is all covered in the first volume of IDW's collection of the strip, *Blondie: The Courtship and Wedding: 1930 to 1933*, which ends (as the title indicates) with the nuptials. This also results in Mr. Bumstead — who's a dead ringer for J.C. Dithers, who would come along years later — cutting his son off from the family fortune, forcing Dagwood to seek employment for the first time in his lazy life. I'm looking forward to more surprises in volume two this month, which promises (in the subtitle) *From Honeymoon to Diapers & Dogs*.



• *The Phantom:* Like *Captain Easy* (which Fantagraphics is reprinting in beautiful, oversize collections), the early *Phantom* strips are charming — they're sort of a cross between a screwball comedy and movie serials. In fact, the tone is that of gleeful, barely controlled chaos, a feeling the Indiana Jones movies captured so well. *Captain Easy* is only up to volume two — I suspect sales haven't been good — and I fervently hope it will continue. Meanwhile, collected editions of *The Phantom* dailies are up to volume four as of this month, with the first collection of Sundays coming in February. And if, like me, your introduction to The Ghost Who Walks was comic books, fear not: Hermes has scheduled hardcover collections of *Phantom* comic books originally published by Gold Key, King, and Charlton, all in the 2012 pipeline.



• *Peanuts:* Fantagraphics has been doing a beautiful job reprinting Charles Schulz' masterpiece in chronological order — and will be for some time to come. It publishes two books a year, which you can buy singly or wait a bit and get them both in a slipcase. The series is up to the early 1980s, so the strip is at its peak, with popular but latecomer characters like Woodstock and Peppermint Patty already regulars. Do I *really* need to tell you how good this is?

• *Flash Gordon*: This series has never been neglected; currently, the Alex Raymond daily strips are available from both Checker and Kitchen Sink. But the Sundays haven't been reprinted as often and never in their original size — until now. IDW has begun a four-book series reprinting both *Flash Gordon* and its companion strip *Jungle Jim* in full newspaper broadsheet size. I've received the first, and it's spectacular. Titan Books is also beginning a reprint series of Sunday *Gordon* strips in 2012, but it's hard to imagine how it can top IDW.

• *Prince Valiant*: When Fantagraphics began publishing the famous Hal Foster strip in a series of trade paperbacks in the 1980s, I bought them all. It's a testament to how good Fantagraphics' new collection of that material is — it's oversize and hardback — that I'm buying it *again*.

• *Mandrake the Magician*: There have been occasional reprints of portions of Lee Falk's second-most-famous strip now and then over the years. Points to Titan Books for beginning a series of collections for modern readers, starting in July.

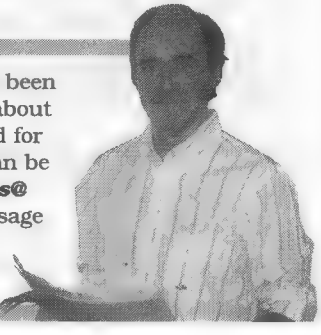
After all the above, is there any wonder why I call this the Golden Age of Reprints?

Believe me, it wasn't always like this. Decent collections were hard to come by until the *Archives* and *Masterworks* series kicked off the current glut and were virtually non-existent in the Silver Age.

What changed? I don't have a definitive answer, but I'd guess a confluence of events, including the availability of cheap printing, Baby Boomers recapturing their youth, and publishers looking for new revenue streams.

Regardless, we live in a time when there's a market for a *Brain Boy* archive. And how can *that* be a bad thing?

ANDREW SMITH, has been writing professionally about comics since 1992, and for CBG since 2000. He can be reached at ***capncomics@aol.com*** or on his message board, ***http://captaincomics.ning.com.***



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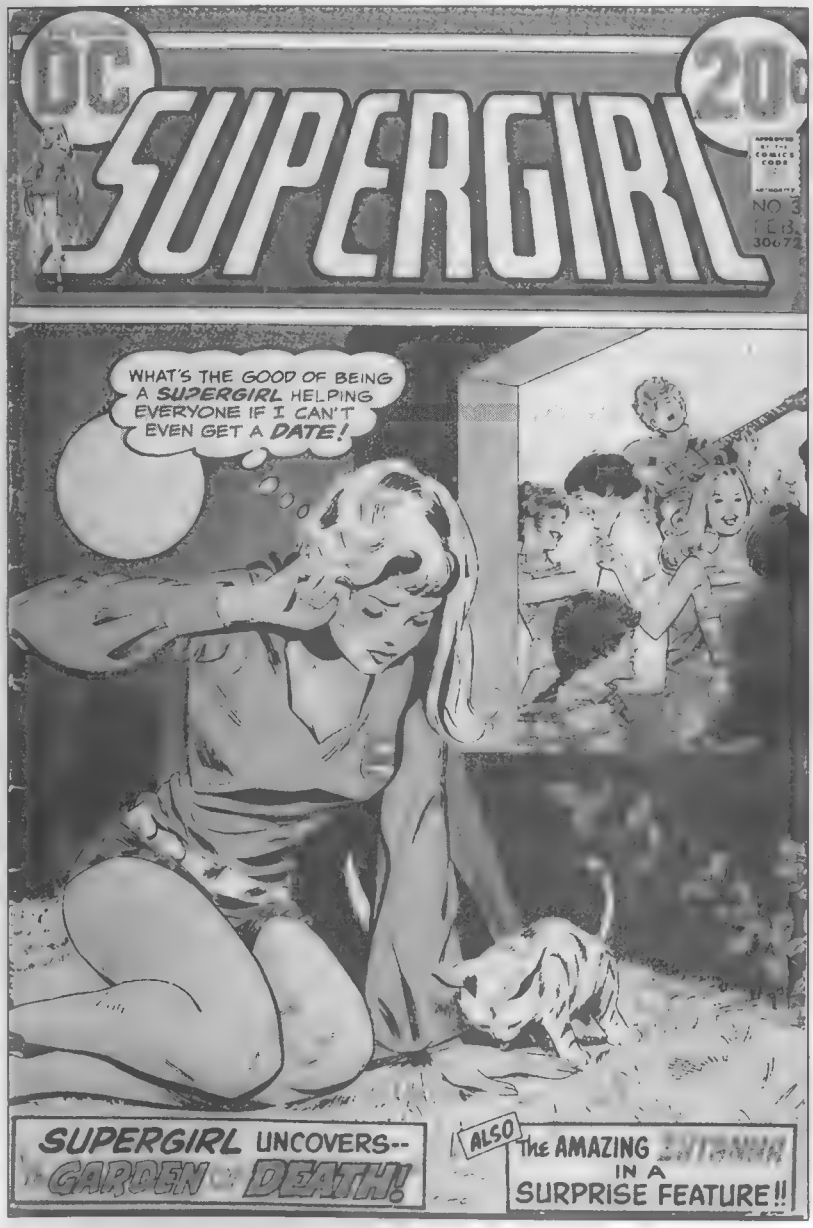
Kara suffered through a string of romances that really weren't that super

Linda Lee's lousy love life!

by **CRAIG "MR. SILVER AGE" SHUTT**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WHAT'S THE GOOD OF BEING A SUPERGIRL HELPING EVERYONE IF I CAN'T EVEN GET A DATE!
SUPERGIRL UNCOVERS-- GARDEN OF DEATH!
ALSO The AMAZING
IN A SURPRISE FEATURE!!

Kara's love life — and gung-ho romantic spirit — was summed up pretty well by the cover to *Supergirl* #3. The kitten was a nice touch.

Dear Mr. Silver Age,

In **CBG** *#1685, you gave Supergirl a Mopee Award because she tried to date a guy who was really a gal, and you noted that was pretty typical for her. Did she really have bad romantic luck?*

Patsy W.
Centerville, Calif.

Mr. Silver Age says: She really did, Pats. In fact, that 2011 Mopee Award was the *second* she won for her goofy love life. (See the sidebar.) And I wouldn't be surprised if she wins a few more, considering her awful luck and terrible judgment in finding dates throughout a career that has spanned decades and a number of titles.

After extensive research and careful examination, I've determined that Supergirl's first romance took place in "Supergirl's First Romance!" in *Action Comics* #269 (Oct 60). Said romance featured Jerro, a merboy from Atlantis. Nothing like getting your romantic life off on the wrong foot. (Pardon the wordplay.)

Supergirl met Jerro after being summoned to Atlantis by Lori Lemaris while Superman was away on one of his pesky "space missions." Jerro, the son of a scientist, served as her guide while she destroyed super-weapons that had gotten loose (long story). Mission accomplished, she blushed, as Jerro complimented her strength and loveliness.

The smitten Kara allowed Jerro to give her the 10-fin tour, which ultimately led to a little smooch, her first from a boy. She thought about how wonderful he was, not understanding how underwater telepathy works. Embarrassed, she skedaddled out of Atlantis but lay awake reliving the events.

"I'm happy — yet miserable!" she moaned. "What's happening to me!" You're in love for the first time but dreaming the impossible dream of romancing an Atlantean, Kara. You won't be the first Kryptonian to do that.

We also should mention Dick Malverne (*né* Wilson) among Supergirl's early suitors, although he didn't know it. Dick met Linda while they were at the Midvale Orphanage in *Action* #256 (Sep 59). He hung around Linda quite a bit, even after both were adopted at nearly the same time by the

AFTERWARD, AS THE GIRL OF STEEL PREPARES TO LEAVE THE 30TH CENTURY...
PLEASE REMAIN... AND BE MY GIRL...!
I'M SORRY, BRAINIACS! I MUST RETURN TO MY OWN TIME-ERA TO BE SUPERMAN'S EMERGENCY WEAPON! SOMEDAY WE'LL MEET AGAIN!

Supergirl was swept off her feet by the suave charm, silver tongue, and greenish tint of Brainiac 5 in *Action Comics* #276.

Danvers and Malvernes, respectively. (What were the odds?)

But he was less of a boyfriend and more of a friend who was a boy. Mostly, he was a pest who suspected Linda's secret and kept her on her toes protecting her identity — at the orphanage and then in high school.

Another big-time romance began the year after she met Jerro, when Kara met "Supergirl's Three Super Girl-Friends!" in *Action* #276 (May 61). After bedeviling The Maid of Might (a club tradition), the three revealed they were Legionnaires Saturn Girl, Phantom Girl, and Triplicate Girl. They'd arrived in Supergirl's time to invite her to join the group. She agreed, so they bubbled back to the future to let her compete for membership.

Supergirl was stunned to discover a familiar face among the contestants: Brainiac 5, a descendant of the original villain (actually, as later retconned, a descendant of Brainiac 2 — long, long story). He was looking to make up for his ancestral name, and, fortunately, the new Legion charter allowed one boy and one girl to join. (What were the chances?)

Needless to say, the two cleaned up in the competition. Supergirl was suspicious of Brainiac 5 but she was finally won over, when he saved her life from a kryptonite meteor. As Supergirl prepared to leave, Brainiac 5 asked her to stay and be his steady. But she had this "emergency weapon" job lined up back in 1961 that seemed pretty sweet.

When she returned home, she happened to run into Jerro, who again professed his "admiration" for her. It reminded her that she had two sorta-boyfriends, neither of which made a strong option for marriage material.

Jerro faded from sight, whereas Brainy hung on waiting for his 1,000-year-old girlfriend. He made his position clear many years later in "One Hero Too Many!" in *Action* #387 (Apr 70), when The Legion had to drop one member for tax reasons (long, unimportant story).

Supergirl decided to resign because she'd missed so many meetings, but Brainiac 5 wouldn't let her. "You can't go, Supergirl! I love you!" he exclaimed. "Forget me, Querl!" she replied. "We belong to different worlds ... different eras! Goodbye!" She rescinded her resignation, when Comet and Streaky (her super-pets) vowed they would resign from The Legion of Super-Pets if she left The Legion. Let's not even ask how they got Streaky, a common 1970 housecat with only occasional super-powers, to agree to that one.

Kara had a *third* super-suitor during her *Action* days (no wordplay intended) that was just as unlikely as the other two: Comet the Super-Horse! Yes, I know: eww. But Comet wasn't *really* a horse, so it's not so bad! At least, as long as we don't think about her riding around bareback. Supergirl met "The Super-Steed of Steel!" in *Action* #292 (Sep 62) and we learned his origin in the next issue.

He actually was a centaur who'd aided Circe, but her attempt to turn him into a man backfired and he became a horse instead. Oops. Then, her enemy exiled him to a remote asteroid, where he happened to be saved by a glancing blow by Kara Zor-El's rocketship as it left Argo City. (What were the chances?) He followed her to Earth to return the favor.

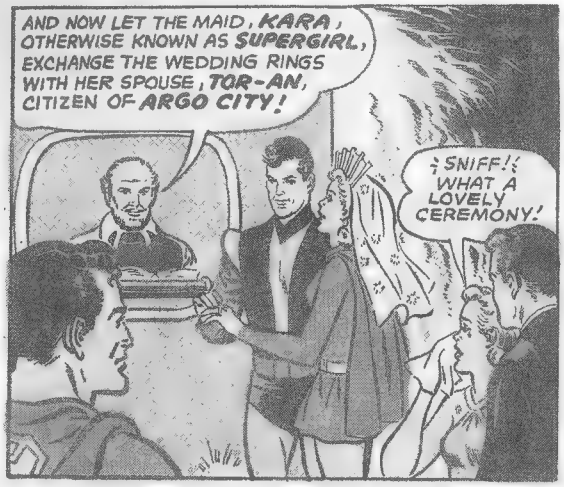
In *Action* #311 (Apr 64), Circe found a way to transform Comet into a fully human Biron, and he romanced Linda Lee Danvers. Smooches ensued, but ultimately he had to revert to his equine form, leaving Supergirl wondering where her handsome cowboy went — and bemoaning his loss to her super-horse. Eww again.

Linda Lee Danvers finally got to smooch her mysterious cowboy suitor (aka Comet, the Super-Horse, aka Biron the centaur) in *Action Comics* #311.

Those were Supergirl's main men during her *Action* run: a merman, an alien from the future trying to make up for the terrible deeds of his "ancestor," and a were-horse. Probably not a group that made the other female Legionnaires green with envy. Of course, Kara also had a number of short-term *Action* suitors — and they made those three look positively dreamy.

The goofiest was the one who wanted to make her "The Bride of Mr. Mxyzptlk!" in *Action* #291 (Aug 61). The 5th-dimensional imp decided to bedevil the female side of the El family for a change. But her ingenuity and anger at his antics ("You're the greatest creep there ever was!") charmed him. Smitten, he proposed. Disgusted, she turned him down.

Undeterred, he sweetened the pot by, um, bringing her parents back to life! (Technically, her parents were alive in The Survival Zone, but she and we and maybe even he didn't know that, so maybe these were just an amazing simulation. Let's not


AND NOW LET THE MAID, KARA, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS SUPERGIRL, EXCHANGE THE WEDDING RINGS WITH HER SPOUSE, TOR-AN, CITIZEN OF ARGO CITY!
;SNIFF!; WHAT A LOVELY CEREMONY!

Despite the lovely ceremony and having her adoptive parents on hand for the Fortress marriage to Tor-An in *Action Comics* #307, things didn't work out for Kara.

think about it.) They had a tearful reunion until Zor decided that having Mxyzptlk for a son-in-law would be nifty. But it was all a ploy to make Mxy vanish at the altar — which also made Zor and Allura disappear, too. What a dad.

Supergirl finally got her wedding day in "Supergirl's Wedding Day!" in *Action* #307 (Dec 63). This time, a dashing young Kryptonian villain escaped from The Phantom Zone with the intent of wrecking the El family and freeing his compatriots. Tor-An's cunning plan involved attending Linda's school in a civilian disguise and ultimately revealing his super-powers and secret identity so he could romance her, marry her, and *then* reveal she'd married a villain. Mwah-hah-haaah!

Sure enough, Supergirl was dazzled, and Tor arranged a wedding at The Fortress of Solitude. As soon as the vows were complete, he revealed his hatred for Kara and his cunning plan to disgrace her.

His plan worked perfectly, except for the part where he was hoaxed by Saturn Girl, with the help of Comet and Jerro, who had alerted Supergirl to the real deal. The vows took place on a transporter that trapped Tor in a kryptonite cage, pending his return to The Phantom Zone. It left Kara brokenhearted but, at least, a super-singleton.

A temporary red-kryptonite quirk and a groom who thought in absolutes kept Kara from marrying Prince Raynor of the Inner World in *Adventure Comics* #385.

IT'S A REAL LOVE MATCH! A BLIND MAN COULD SEE THAT!
IT'S WONDERFUL! WE'LL BE GRANDPARENTS AT LAST! AND I WON'T HAVE TO KEEP QUIET WHEN OUR RELATIVES BOAST OF THEIR GRANDCHILDREN.
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
10

Once Supergirl moved out of the back of *Action* and into the front of *Adventure Comics*, swapping places with The Legion (one of the all-time worst Silver Age editorial decisions), Kara's love life took a decided turn south — and that's saying something. Gone were the unfortunate but sincere suitors of her *Action* days, replaced by a batch of ne'er-do-wells that had her considering super-spinsterhood. *These* losers included:

• Volar of Torma, the notorious date who won Kara her second romantic Mopee Award in ***CBG*** #1685. Supergirl wined and dined Volar in *Adventure* #384 (Sep 69), only to discover he was really a she, disguising her gender due to her world's misogynistic attitude.

• Prince Raynor of the Inner World, who performed "The Jilting of Supergirl!" in *Adventure* #385 (Oct 69). After a bunch of less-than-super dates, Linda Lee dated a classmate who turned out to be super — literally. His subjects adored her, as did the king and queen, and they were betrothed. But their internal sun apparently used red kryptonite in its filters, causing Kara to lose her powers. (What were the chances?) Despite her pleas that it wore off and couldn't affect her again, Raynor rejected her — and she never returned, like, a week later to prove her red-k theory had been correct.

• Eek, aka "The Beast That Loved Supergirl!" in *Adventure* #386 (Nov 69), who was captured in a South American jungle and brought to America. He broke out of his cage, fell in love with Supergirl when she tried to restrain him, and followed her everywhere, almost revealing her identity in the process. But he turned out to be that darn 5th-dimentional imp trying to punk her, and she sent him packing.

Kara wore her formal Supergirl costume during a date with British charmer Derek Ames, a Starfire minion, in *Adventure Comics* #402. The epaulets are a nice touch.

• Kimor Dann, a narcissistic alien criminal who became "The Romance Machine" in *Adventure* #388-389 under the direction of Brainiac. The villain decided to "practice" destroying Kryptonians by focusing on her. His cunning plan involved creating a robotic replica of the charming Kimor, implanting his personality and having the robot woo Supergirl and then blow up in a romantic "suicide" that would force a devastated Kara to retire. And he called himself "Brainiac." Long story short: Supergirl fell for the guy, of course, but it didn't work out so well for the robot — or Kimor.

Once Mike Sekowsky took over Supergirl's direction with *Adventure* #397 (Sep 70) — somewhat coincidentally the month that some of us believe the Silver Age ended — her continual bad dates subsided. However, she was wined and dined by a Derek Ames, a charming minion of the evil Starfire in "Love Conquers All — Even Supergirl" in *Adventure* #402 (Feb 71).

She fell for his British charm (Such phrases as "Blimey, luv!" probably set her knees to knocking.) and was led into an ambush that removed her powers.

OF COURSE, YOUR INFERIOR BREEDING WILL NOT ALLOW ME TO EVER CONSIDER YOU AS AN EQUAL, BUT IF YOU TRY HARD...
WHAT?
IT'S WHAT I WEAR WHEN I'M ABOUT TO STOP A DANGEROUS FANATIC LIKE YOU, COMMANDER!

A space pirate saw past the ugliest costume Supergirl ever donned (and the competition was fierce) to kidnap her to be his mate in *Adventure Comics* #415.

But she thwarted that, and Derek's reward for doing his job was a bullet from Starfire minions. (What goes around comes around.)

Her final romantic *Adventure* came when she met "The Space Pirates!" in #415 (Feb 72). Despite Supergirl's flaunting the worst costume she ever wore (and I know the competition), the head pirate kidnapped her to become his wife. That didn't go as planned. The space-cops ultimately led him away in cuffs, which never heightens the romantic mood.

Kara gained her own title in 1972, where she became lousy with new romantic entanglements (wordplay intended). Her love life hasn't improved through various incarnations since those halcyon Silver Age days, but at least she doesn't obsess about it so much. Apparently, she throws that energy into finding a decent costume: a futile search since she gave up that first one that had worked so well.

A MATCH MADE FOR MOPEE

Supergirl's first Mopee Award for dating silliness came in **CBG** #1410 (Nov 24, 2000), when she and Wonder Woman produced "The Revolt of the Super-Chicks" in *The Brave and The Bold* #63 (Jan 66). It was, indeed, pretty revolting.

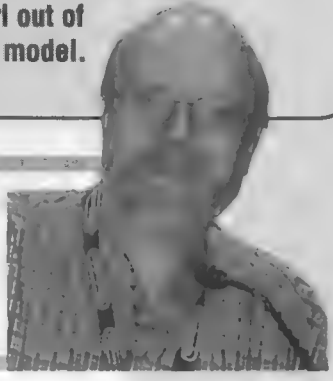
Upset that she wasn't perceived as girly, Supergirl took a year off from college (no, really) to live it up in Paris as a fashion model. Concerned, Superman asked Diana to check on his cousin. When she arrived and found Kara in a liplock with some debonair French guy (the beret was the giveaway), Wonder Woman scolded her. "Your powers! They make you different! They — Oooh! That dress! It's adorable! Where did you get it?"

With that, Diana and Kara took off on a whirlwind romance with two suave French guys who treated them the way women like to be treated. (Kids, don't try this at home.) Soon, Wonder Woman admitted that she was a Francophile. "Steve Trevor never kissed me like that! I mustn't let this happen ... this wonderful, delicious thing!"

Sadly, a villain named Multi-Face disrupted said thing, but the girls managed to battle him without their beaus becoming wise. That would have destroyed their vision of the ladies' femininity and ruined everything. The issue is well worth checking out, if only to consider which of these ditzy super-heroines was "brave" and which was "bold."

UPON ENTERING HER DRESSING ROOM...
SUPERGIRL, MA CHERIE... ZE MOMENTS WAITING FOR YOU ARE LIKE ETERNITIES OF PAIN! JE T'ADORE -- JE...
OH, NO!... THIS IS TOO MUCH! SUPERGIRL'S BECOME A GLAMORPUSS PLAYGIRL... AND SOME GIGOLO'S IN LOVE WITH HER!

Sacre bleu! In *The Brave and the Bold* #63, Wonder Woman tried to talk Supergirl out of becoming a Parisian playgirl/fashion model. Then she decided it looked like fun.



Known to fans worldwide as "Mr. Silver Age," **CRAIG SHUTT** has waxed nostalgic about comics of old in **CBG** since 1992. Send comments and suggestions to **craigshutt@ameritech.net**.

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From super-heroes to super-lovers

Quality romances in more than one sense

by **MICHELLE NOLAN**

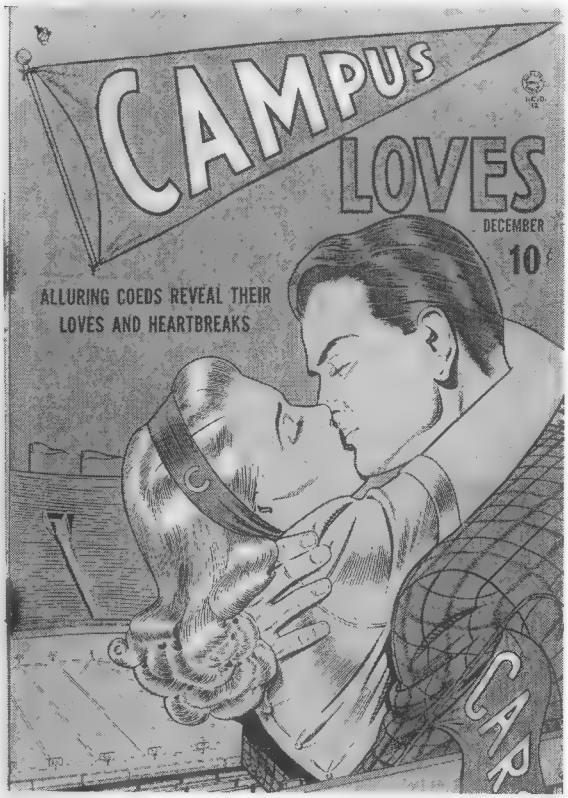
During the summer of 1950, Quality Comics canceled all 14 of its romance titles, thanks to an unexpected industry glut of love comics, the like of which was never seen again. Five years later (less than a year before Quality left the comics business), the firm published all eight of its romance titles on a monthly basis for eight months — a burst unique in comic-book history.

Moreover, as hostilities in the Korean War were winding down, Quality decided to publish, not one, but *two* war-romance titles — and, for reasons lost in the mists of time, actually kept both going two years after the fighting ceased. In 1953, Quality mysteriously changed one of its best-selling romance titles from *Love Letters* to *Love Secrets* — then eight months later decided to start a "new" series called *Love Letters* while picking up the original numbering after *Love Secrets* had done the same thing.

After a decade as one of the leading super-hero publishers of the Golden Age, Quality made a near-complete switch and spent its last seven years as the first-tier publisher most dependent on romance comics. In fact, of the 844 issues Quality published in 1950-1956, 344 were love comics — more than 40%. And this included the period of the 1950 cancellations.

If you get the idea that Quality was the most unpredictable of all romance publishers, you would be correct.

Yet if you have a coverless Quality issue — all of which carried their indicia on the inside front cover — no romance publisher is easier to identify, due to the firm's heavy house inking style and, of course, the title



at the top of every story page of every issue. But, due to the lack of house ads — Quality published fewer than almost any other publisher except Dell — you'll have no way of identifying which issue you have without the help of an index or someone who already owns one.

It's also likely that, in the post-Comics Code period of 1955-1956 (Quality's last two years in comics), no publisher printed a higher percentage of romance covers featuring female tears — with the possible exception of DC. There were *so* many tears that author John Benson was inspired to title his reprint book of St. John romance comics *Romance without Tears* (2003, Fantagraphics), featuring the high-caliber, psychologically sound work of artist Matt Baker and writer Dana Dutch.

Nonetheless, Quality romance comics remain collectible for a combination of decent art featuring wonderful fashions, often outrageous stories, occasionally memorable covers, and some of the

most imaginative titles in the Golden Era of four-color flirtations.

In all, including the first 14 romance comics Quality published in 1949, the firm's output of 358 romance issues was exceeded in the 1947-1956 period only by Timely/Atlas, which published 382 during the genre's first decade. In essence, Quality went from being a super-hero publisher to a romance publisher, even though the firm did experiment (and often succeed) with most other genres at one time or another.

Quality did not allow its romance artists to sign their work, and the writers received no credits, either. The occasional story with art by the likes of Bill Ward, Paul Gustavson, Chuck Cuidera, or Matt Baker is apparent, but most of the firm's romance stories remain an educated guess at best — and then only by such experts as Jim Vadeboncoeur Jr., or Hames Ware.

These stories are, however, nothing less than fun, especially in the often wild and wacky 1949-1950 issues, which numbered 80 across the 14 titles, all of which ran from four to eight issues on a strictly bi-monthly basis. Quality had the best bookkeepers in the business and almost never made numbering or date errors, unlike so many other publishers of the period.

One of the best of all romance titles, *Heart Throbs*, was Quality's first effort, with #1 (Aug 49). The 14th title was *Forbidden Love* #1 (Mar 50). In between, the original titles ran the gamut of emotions: *Love Diary* (which became *Diary Loves* with #2; see below), *Love Confessions, Love Letters, Hollywood Secrets, Secret Loves, Campus Loves, Flaming Love, Hollywood Diary, Range Romances, Broadway Romances, Untamed Love,* and *Love Scandals*. Pretty much covered it all, right?

Considering that nearly 150 romance titles appeared on the stands at one time or another in the second half of 1949 and the first half of 1950, Quality could hardly be blamed for the title of its second romance comic book, *Love Diary* #1 (Sep 49), even though the tiny Our Publishing Co. beat Quality to the romance punch with its first romance comic — *Love Diary* #1 (July 49). The pragmatic solution was typical Quality: *Love Diary* became *Diary Loves* #2 (Nov 49).

Girls In Love
OCTOBER
No. 56
10¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
OH! MR. DRYDEN IS SO HANDSOME! I DON'T CARE IF CHUCK IS JEALOUS... I LOVE ELIOT DRYDEN AND I THINK HE LIKES ME!
HIGH SCHOOL CRUSH
Did My Captain Desert Me?
LITTLE WHITE LIES
They Called Me A Romance Wrecker

If you think Fiction House was the king of cover hype, you haven't seen an early Quality romance comic. Take the cover blurb on *Flaming Love* #1 (Dec 49): "I saw the soul searing passion in the eyes of my beloved as he took the temptress I feared in his arms ..." The title of this little epic was "Tyranny Broke My Heart" and

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COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

told the tale of a daring female American newspaper correspondent who somehow visits a communist country in the early days of the Iron Curtain. (No American comics publisher was more involved in fighting four-color communism than Quality, be it in costumed-hero, spy, crime, war, or romance titles.)

Flaming Love #2 (Feb 50) promised "Torrid Tales of Turbulent Passion," but *Forbidden Love* #4 (Sep 50) topped even that with this blurb: "The trap I set for the man I loathed caught my heart in its vise-like clutches and held it fast! See Brimstone Kisses." *Forbidden Love* #4 also featured perhaps the first of several frenetic roller-derby stories in romance comics: "Hate on Skates." In this story, the good girl "smashes up" the bad girl in a cataclysmic catfight in the rink, then the tale ends with a furious fistfight between the good guy and the bad guy: "Then Bill's lips were on mine, warm and honest and tender, yet passionate, and all the aching past was blotted out by the radiance of love!"

They just don't write them like that these days!

Nobody will be surprised to learn that comic-book dealers have taken advantage of such titles as *Love Scandals* and *Forbidden Love* to raise prices on these exotic gems.

Not all the Quality romance issues were quite so flamboyant, though all featured the height of fashion in the art. For example, *Love Letters* #1 (Nov 49) featured "Bitter Triumph," "Love Swindle," "My Dearest Love," and "The Caged Heart." *Love Letters* #3 (Mar 50) became much more sensational with the cover-featured "I Was a Waterfront Girl" along with "Pursuit of Passion," "Invitation to Surrender," and "I Love You Too, Judy." It was such titles as these that the Comics Code ended with early-1955 issues.

Only four of the original 14 titles were revived: *Diary Loves*, *Love Letters*, and *Love Confessions* in 1951, all of which had generic titles, and *Heart Throbs* in 1952. The likes of *Love Scandals* never returned, and such tales as "I Wrecked a Man's Life" in *Love Scandals* #2 (Apr 50) were often toned down, well before the advent of the Comics Code. But during the height of the 1949-1950 Love Glut, as I long ago dubbed the era, *Love Scandals* also featured "Gossip Stole My Love," "The Ruling Passion," "Flood Tide of Desire," and "I Hated Being a Woman." One of my favorite Quality titles is "I Was Only Human" — indeed! — in *Love Scandals* #5 (Oct 50).

Nobody will be surprised to learn that comic-book dealers have taken advantage of such titles as *Love Scandals* and *Forbidden Love* to raise prices on these exotic gems. What was $3 two decades ago is now $10 or $20 or more — in fact, sometimes *much* more in Fine or better condition.

It will always remain a mystery why Quality kept *GI Sweethearts* (#32-45, picked up from *Diary Loves*) and *True War Romances* (#1-21) going through mid-1955, when *GI Sweethearts* became *Girls in Love* and *True War Romances* morphed into *Exotic Romances*. Quality also published *Bride's Romances* #1-23 and *Wedding Bells* #1-19 in the mid-1950s, when themes of marriage became all the rage in love comics.

Of the 12 issues of *Girls in Love* in 1955-1956 (#46-57), eight featured spurned girls in tears, all with the object of their affection trying to explain himself in one way or another.

Every now and then, Quality would deviate from the post-Code tears and feature such stories as "High School Crush" in *Girls in Love* #46 (Oct 56), in which the star-struck heroine stares up at her teacher and thinks, "Oh! Mr. Dryden is so handsome! I don't care if Chuck is jealous ... I love Eliot Dryden and I think he likes me!" All the while, Chuck — wearing a sweater emblazoned with "1957" on the front — is staring open-mouthed at the girl, not at his lesson.

In this truly bizarre story, 18-year-old Chuck "rescues" 18-year-old Julia from 24-year-old Eliot's romantic attentions, gets into a fistfight with the teacher, and sees the teacher suspended until Julia comes forth to tell the principal that Eliot has done no wrong. Responds the principal: "Oh, I see! In that case, let's forget the whole thing! Run along, young lady and take your football hero with you!" Chuck, however, realizes that Julia and Eliot really are in love. Manning up, so to speak, Chuck actually brings Eliot to Julia and they agree to be married when she graduates!

"Whaddya know!" Chuck exclaims to the both the happy couple and the reader as they kiss. "Looks like you'll be getting two official documents soon — a graduation diploma *[**is** there any other kind?]* and a wedding license!"

As I said, they don't write them like that any more!

I'M TO BLAME! I... I LOVED CHUCK SO MUCH I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW UNFAIR IT WAS TO MR. DRYDEN WHO WAS ONLY TRYING TO PROTECT HIMSELF WHEN CHUCK LOST HIS TEMPER!
OH, I SEE! IN THAT CASE, LET'S FORGET THE WHOLE THING! RUN ALONG, YOUNG LADY... AND TAKE YOUR FOOTBALL HERO WITH YOU!

I COULD FEEL ELIOT'S EYES UPON ME, COLD, HURT, AS CHUCK SNICKERED AND GRABBED MY ARM POSSESSIVELY...
C'MON, HONEY! LET'S YOU AND I GO SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN MAKE SOME PLANS ABOUT OUR FUTURE!

neatstuff

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Tony loves comics

Fun and firsts for winter reading

by **TONY ISABELLA**

Love and marriage, love and marriage,
It's an institute you can't disparage.
Ask the local gentry and they will say it's elementary.
— "Love and Marriage" by Sammy Cahn (lyrics) and Jimmy Van Hausen (music), introduced by Frank Sinatra in 1955

It's our February issue, which means that ***CBG*** editor Brent "Cupid" Frankenhoff has once again asked me to do something of a Valentine's Day nature in my column. Maybe one year he'll surprise me and ask for something about Black History Month, Presidents Day, or maybe even Groundhog's Day. Hope springs eternal.

It's not a good time for love in the comic books, unless you count sleazy rooftop sex. Yes, I'm looking at *you*, Batman and Catwoman.

Well, actually, I turned away when I saw you getting busy on that rooftop. Get a room. Or a Batcave. Or something.

I believe that love and marriage go together like, I dunno, a horse and carriage. You younger readers can Google "horse and carriage" to find out what that is. However, marriage has taken a huge hit in today's comic books.

Marvel made a deal with the devil to erase the marriage of Spider-Man and Mary Jane as if it had never happened. Reed and Sue Richards of The Fantastic Four are still wed, as are Luke Cage and Jessica Jones. The Black Panther bailed on Wakanda in one of the dumbest stories in ages but he's still married to Storm. Matt Murdock and his wife divorced a while back, but I'm not sure about other Marvel couples. Medusa and Black Bolt? Hawkeye and Mockingbird? Shanna and Ka-Zar? Is there a Marvel marriage counseling website I can go to for the status of those other couples?

DC's "New 52" has undone the marriages of Clark Kent and Lois Lane — and Barry Allen and Iris West. Hawkman was revived in a most savage manner and without a Hawkgirl or Hawkwoman. It doesn't look as if Alec Holland is presently Swamp Thing or married to Abby Arcane. I think Aquaman and Mera are still wed, but what about The Midnighter and Apollo? I should know these things. Clearly, I've been removed from DC's social registry.

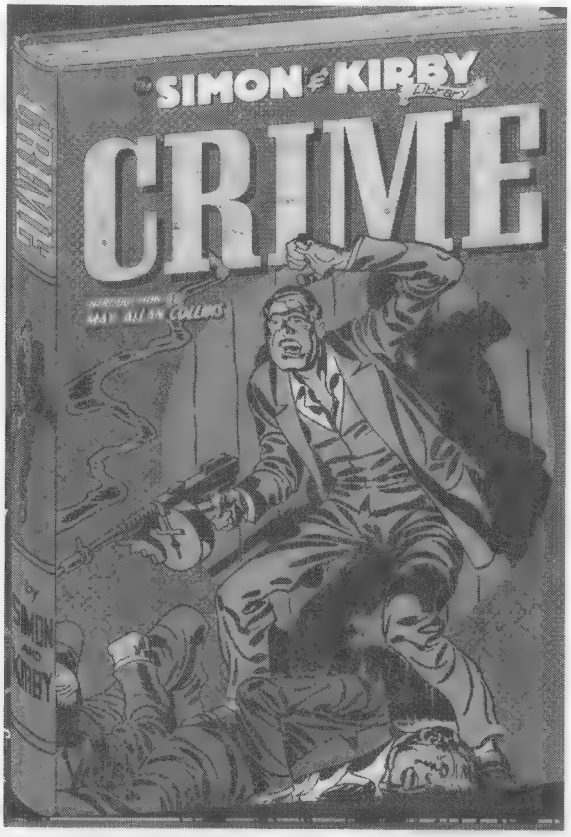
Comic-strip marriages seem to have more staying power. Blondie and Dagwood. Dick and Tess Tracy. Rex and June Morgan. The Phantom and Diana. Hagar the Horrible and Helga. Hi and Lois. Alice and Henry Mitchell, the parents of Dennis the Menace. Many others. Heck, even Spidey and MJ are still married in the newspapers.

For all their big talk about comic books being enjoyed by readers of all ages, DC and Marvel still tailor their comics for adolescent males and unmarried man-children. Maybe not exclusively, but too much for their own good. Call out their editors and publishers on this, and they'll give you some well-rehearsed line about how kids don't find parents interesting and don't want to read about married couples in comic books. I don't buy that argument.

Sainted Wife Barb and I have been married for nearly 28 years, and, though we hardly live the life of super-heroes, those 28 years have been filled with drama, excitement, surprises, and, fairly often, the triumph of good over evil. Maybe it's not that kids don't want to read about married couples. Maybe it's that the writers aren't good enough to bring out the excitement of two people making a life for themselves and their children in a marriage. The writers and editors and publishers blame the readers for their own inability to tell great stories with such characters.

That's my Valentine's Day bit, Brent. Next year, I think our theme should be National Bird-Feeding Month!

The Simon and Kirby Library: Crime (Titan Books, $49.95) reprints nearly three dozen tales of



con men, gangsters, and killers by the legendary team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. As odd as it seems in reference to crime fiction and kind of sort of non-fiction, these stories are big fun. Where the more successful *Crime Does Not Pay* comics used huge blocks of copy to drive home the moral expressed in its title, the Simon and Kirby approach put storytelling before detail and preaching. They never failed to portray crime and its perpetrators as true blights on society, but their writing was more bold and Kirby's art was more action-packed than that seen in other crime comic books of the era. Characters move across the "stage" and emotions are portrayed in such an in-your-face manner that it's like watching a 3-D movie.

Included in this 320-page, full-color collection are a handful of stories starring recurring characters: the mysterious Gunmaster and special investigator "Red Hot" Blaze. There are tales of criminals past and present, some of them "true" in the sense that they only play slightly loose with actual facts. There are character studies of criminals who, sometimes too late, regret the bad choices they've made. Some of these characters even seek to make amends for their crimes beyond serving their prison sentences.

Like every other book in Titan's *Simon and Kirby Library, Crime* is worthy of award consideration. I treasure my copy and recommend it to all fans of the legendary team *and* to all serious students of American comic books.

www.titanbooks.com
ISBN: 9781848569607

If we're talking about comics every comics reader should have — and I like to talk about that more often than not — we can't overlook the ***Amelia Rules!*** series by Jimmy Gownley. It's funny, it's real — and, if these books don't tug at your heartstrings, you need to find yourself a heartstrings donor *stat.*

If *Ameila Rules!* doesn't tug at your heartstrings, you need to find yourself a heartstrings donor *stat.*

Amelia McBride lives with her divorced mom, misses her dad and her old friends, sticks by her new friends through thick and thin, and tries to navigate through life's mysteries as best she can. Just like the rest of us.

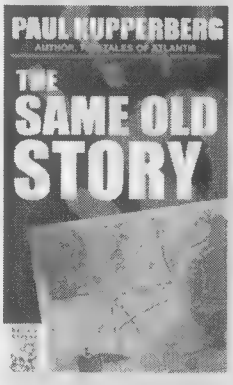
Gownley's *The Meaning of Life ... and Other Stuff* (Atheneum, $10.99) is his newest Amelia release. At various times during my reading of the book, I felt my heart sink and then rise. We've all had times when we haven't been a good friend and we've all had times when our friends prove why they're our friends. We've all had to deal with authority figures who are cruel and unreasonable for no good reason other than that they *can* be cruel and unreasonable. We've all had those moments when a friend is hurting and we don't know what we can do about it. I love these characters and this book because its heart pumps through my life as much as it does Amelia's. It's one of the best and most moving comics ever.

http://kids.SimonandSchuster.com
ISBN: 978-1-4619-8612-6

My old pal Paul Kupperberg has published three ebooks: ***The Same Old Story, In My Shorts***, and ***Two Tales of Atlantis***. Each of them is available on Kindle for 99¢ apiece. I have only the vaguest of notions on how this works, but Paul sent me PDFs of the books and I've managed to read the first of them without causing any apparent damage to the Internet tubes. I plan to read the others soon but I didn't want to hold off recommending *The Same Old Story* to you.

It's a hoot and a half.

It's the comics industry's darkest days. Two



freelancers working for the same publisher are murdered within days of each other, and writer Max Wiser, the son of a NYPD homicide detective, is driven to find out who done it and why. Cue the beautiful blonde who is also involved.

Comics fans and historians will have a ball trying to identify the book's versions of actual comics legends. Detective-fiction fans will enjoy the pulpy goodness of Kupperberg's writing. Guys like me will bug Kupperberg for a second Max Wiser book. Getting this much for a buck is a real bargain.

In My Shorts: Hitler's Bellhop and Other Stories collects six short stories. *Two Tales of Atlantis* features two longer stories that might remind you of Kupperberg's run on *Arion, Lord of Atlantis*, a hero he created for DC back in the day. I might have to buy one of those Kindle machines to read them. Do they run on batteries or gasoline?

For information on ordering these books and all things Kupperberg, you should visit his blog at *http://kupperberg.blogspot.com*

It's worth visiting just for the photos of Paul sitting jauntily in the Batcopter.

I think *All-Ghouls School* has the potential to make the transition to TV as an alternative to the steamy teen angst fantasies usually found on the small screen.

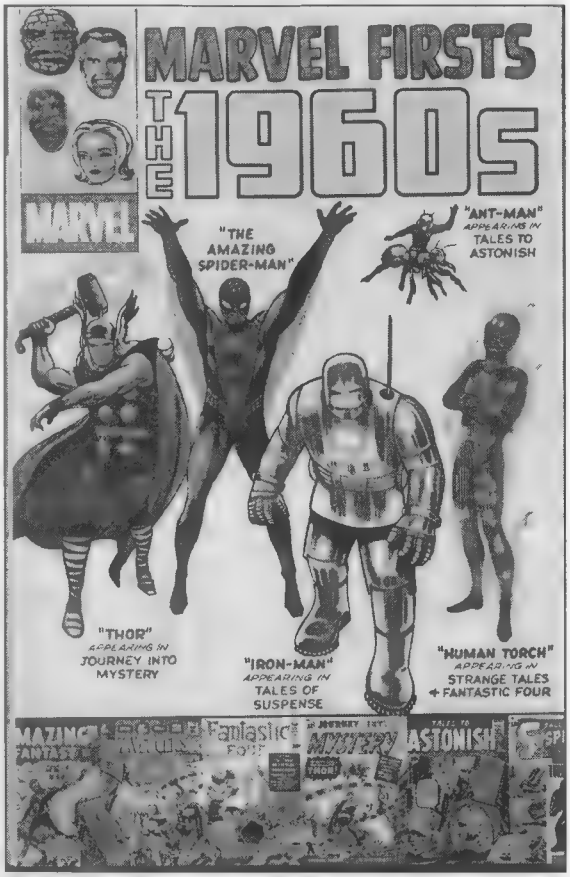
What happens when that really popular high-school girl gets busted in a cheating scandal not of her doing? For Becca Norman, it means spending her summer at a creepy boarding school and going from being the cool girl to being the new girl.

Readers young and old will enjoy ***All-Ghouls School*** by Marc Sumerak with artist David Bryant (IDW, $19.99). Becca quickly learns she's the only ordinary human in a student body of vampires, demons, and werewolves. The devilish headmaster wants to bring diversity into his school to better prepare students to interact peacefully with the human world. His daughter is determined to make Becca's summer a living, well, you know.

This graphic novel, the first in what I hope will be a long-running series, checks off all the boxes: great characters, humor, a bit of dread, challenges, satisfying solutions, and surprises throughout.

Indeed, I think the series has the potential to make the transition to TV as an alternative to the steamy teen angst fantasies usually found on the small screen. But, while you're waiting for Hollywood to get a clue, check out *All-Ghouls School*. It's a terrific book.

www.idwpublishing.com
ISBN: 978-1600109928


MARVEL FIRSTS
THE 1960s
MARVEL
"THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN"
"ANT-MAN" APPEARING IN TALES TO ASTONISH
"THOR" APPEARING IN JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY
"IRON-MAN" APPEARING IN TALES OF SUSPENSE
"HUMAN TORCH" APPEARING IN STRANGE TALES & FANTASTIC FOUR

Marvel Firsts: The 1960s (Marvel, $29.99) is a joyous ride through the beginnings of the Marvel Universe established by Stan Lee with collaborators Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Larry Lieber, Don Heck, and so many others. In nearly 500 full-color pages, this chunky wonder of a book lovingly collects the first appearances of the heroes who made the comics world their own in that decade.

The line-up includes the "A" listers and the barely-remembered "D" listers: Rawhide Kid; Dr. Droom; The Fantastic Four; Henry Pym; The Hulk; Spider-Man; Thor; The Human Torch (in Johnny Storm's initial solo appearance); Two-Gun Kid; Iron Man; Sgt. Fury and the Howling Commandoes; Doctor Strange; The Avengers; The X-Men; The Wasp telling a tale; The Watcher telling another tale; Daredevil; Captain America in the start of his 1960s solo feature; Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.; The Sub-Mariner in the start of his 1960s solo feature; The Ghost Rider (the Western version); Captain Marvel (Kree version); Captain Savage and his Leatherneck Raiders (You are

MY HEAD-- IT FEELS STRANGE! I-I NEED SOME AIR!
LOOKS AS THOUGH OUR EX-PERIMENT UNNERVED YOUNG PARKER!
TOO BAD! HE MUST HAVE A WEAK STOMACH!

allowed to say, "Who?" here.); the origin of The Silver Surfer; and pivotal stories of Ka-Zar and Doctor Doom. But wait, there's more.

Marvel Firsts: The 1960s also includes several pages of covers of the other issues Marvel was publishing during that decade. You get romance, war comics, giant monsters, Westerns, *Patsy Walker, Millie the Model, Monsters to Laugh With*, and dozens of other nods to the past. Makes me wish Marvel would reprint all of those comic books, as well, but, hey, when it comes to the 1960s, I'm a Marvel maniac through and through.

I was a pre-teen and a teenager in the 1960s. DC and other comics publishers would not have been able to keep me excited about comic books. It's not that they published *bad* comic books — because they all published some very fine comic books. But they didn't have the excitement, the spark, the compelling nature of even minor Marvels.

I'm writing this column today because of Stan, Jack, Steve, Larry, Don, Dick Ayers, and all of those other Marvel writers and artists.

Years have passed since I last shouted "Make Mine Marvel," but my admiration for and appreciation of the terrific comic books Marvel published before I went to work for the company has not diminished even slightly.

Enough personal digression. *Marvel Firsts: The 1960s* is another of those books that every comic-book fan — certainly every Marvel fan — needs to have. It's a treasure!

www.marvel.com
ISBN: 978-0-7851-5864-6

TONY ISABELLA, comics writer and author, has been appearing in **CBG** since #3 in 1971. Comments on this column and review items for future columns can be sent to: Tony's Tips, 840 Damon Drive, Medina, OH 44256.
You can e-mail Tony at ***tonyisa@ohio.net***.

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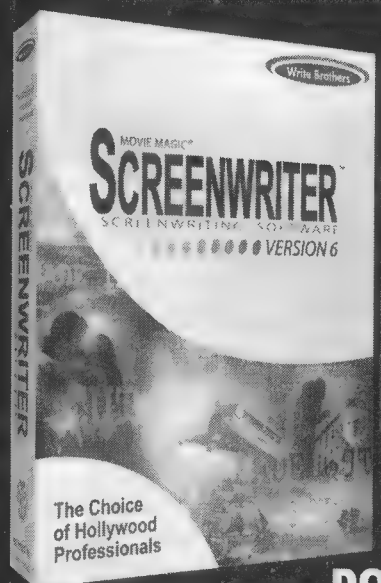
Mark Waid & Movie Magic® Screenwriter™



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Mark Waid
Instructor, editor, and writer
Of over 50 graphic novels including Kingdom Come

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NAVIGATING THE MAINSTREAM

PICKS AND PANS FROM DARK HORSE, DC, IDW, IMAGE, AND MARVEL

REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH COMIC BOOK

Severed #1 ★★★

Image

$2.99, color, 28 pgs.
Writers: Scott Snyder, Scott Tuft
Artist: Attila Futaki

Scott Snyder has taken the comics world by storm over the past year with his writing on such titles as *American Vampire* and *Detective Comics*. Snyder's latest work is this new horror series from Image that explores the life of a young violinist who encounters evil while trying to achieve his music dreams.

After retiree Jack Garron receives a mysterious letter sent by someone from his past, the story flashes back to events taking place 40 years earlier. As a young boy, he runs away from home to meet his real father in Chicago. At the same time, another boy in an orphanage has inexplicably been offered an apprenticeship from a General Electric salesman. It quickly becomes obvious that the salesman's offer is not entirely altruistic, especially during a historical period when the exhaustive background checks required for adopting a child were still decades away.

Snyder's talent for story pacing has created a horror tale that gradually builds up the suspense for the reader. Futaki's realistic art style contributes to the overall "creepy" feeling readers will experience when reading this issue.

— Christopher Galvan

www.imagecomics.com

Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz #1 ★★★★

Marvel

$3.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Eric Shanower
Artist: Skottie Young

Adapting one of L. Frank Baum's lesser-known Oz books has its advantages: less baggage with the original or the first few spin-offs, new characters that aren't ingrained in the psyche of most people, and the opportunity to spotlight some of the Baum's more bizarre creations.

There's no better team to tackle this than Eric Shanower and Skottie Young, whose previous two Baum adaptations were excellent examples of stylistically reviving a tired subject. Here, Dorothy arrives in the California town of Hugson's Siding to meet Uncle Henry after a trip to Australia. Her train is met by her cousin Zeb, but on the way to the ranch an earthquake opens a crevice into which they tumble, horse, buggy and all. Their fall lasts far longer than it should, and partway down Zeb's horse Jim begins to express talents unknown previously: he talks. So does Dorothy's cat, Eureka. The land they finally arrive in is, it is safe to say, far stranger even than talking animals.

As in the previous two outings, Skottie's art keeps things light (no pun intended) with superior pacing and viewpoints. And no one knows, or can interpret, Baum better these days than Shanower, who once again shows an uncanny ability to infuse new magic into these tales.

— Timothy J. Wood

www.marvel.com

Brightest Day Aftermath: The Search for Swamp Thing #3 ★½

DC

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Jonathan Vankin
Artists: Marco Castiello, Vincenzo Acunzo

John Constantine attempts to return Alec Holland to the land of the dead so that Holland's psyche can be implanted back into Swamp Thing's body. Without a human psyche, Swamp Thing will continue to be controlled by the elemental force known as "The Green." Batman, of course, has a problem with Constantine committing murder, regardless of the reason. This story follows the recent conclusion of the *Brightest Day* series, in which Swamp Thing and Constantine were both returned to the DC Universe.

Unfortunately, this entire series leaves the nagging feeling that we've all been here before, and with good reason. It's a theme already explored in depth by both Grant Morrison and Joshua Dysart during their runs on *Swamp Thing*. Swamp Thing and Constantine got their start in the mainstream DC Universe (Alan Moore's stories still hold up well today), but both characters moved on to bigger and better things when they found a new home at Vertigo. This mini-series brought nothing new to the table, and had an inconclusive and unsatisfying ending.

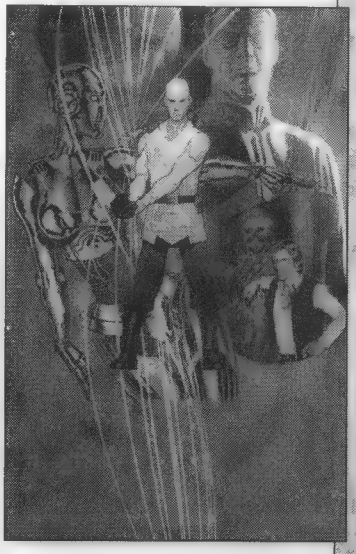
— Christopher Galvan

www.dccomics.com

Star Wars: Agent of the Empire #1 ★★★

Dark Horse

$3.50, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: John Ostrander
Artists: Stéphane Roux, Julien Hugonnard-Bert



The five-part limited series by long-time *Star Wars* writer John Ostrander takes place three years before the events of *Star Wars: A New Hope*. Jahan Cross is an espionage agent for The Empire, specifically both Imperial Intel and Diplomatic Services.

Cross is investigating a secret project called Iron Eclipse on the fringes of the galaxy, where The Empire's authority is hit or miss. On Etti IV, he runs into a classmate from The Imperial Academy who had been a year behind him — Han Solo. Han (being Han) cheated several shady individuals in a game of Sabacc. So, along with Chewbecca, Han and Cross battle the sore losers. At the end of the first issue, it's heavily implied that Han will play a supporting role in this saga.

It would've been great to have Ostrander reteam with artist Jan Duursema, his collaborator from *Star Wars: Legacy*. However, Stéphane Roux and Julien Hugonnard-Bert do a good job on the art. Their artistry is clean and detailed, and their work complements Ostrander's script, moving the story along.

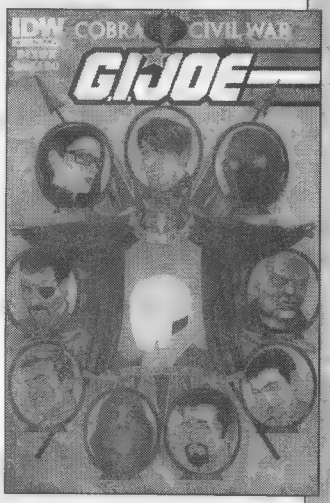
— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.darkhorse.com

G.I. Joe #8 ★★★

IDW

$3.99, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Chuck Dixon
Artist: Will Rosado



Think of this title as "Ultimate G.I. Joe," if you will. It has nothing to do with the Devil's Due *G.I. Joe* mythos nor Larry Hama's continuation of what he would have done with the title, had Marvel not canceled it in 1994. This title — along with *Cobra* and *Snake-Eyes* — exists in its own continuity separate from the above-mentioned incarnations.

Cobra Commander is dead, so many players in the terrorist organization's high command — Baroness, Destro, Serpentor, Major Bludd, *et al.* — compete against each other to become the next Cobra Commander in the "Cobra Civil War" event. This issue reveals who has the coveted job of Cobra Commander — complete with scratch-off cover.

Sorry, no spoilers here.

What *will* be said is that the character who becomes Cobra Commander is just as ruthless, calculating, cold-blooded, and arrogant as the original we all know and love — especially with the way Zartan, the master of disguise, is shoehorned into the campaign. Chuck Dixon has spearheaded the "Cobra Civil War" story arc and knows how to pump plenty of testosterone into his scripts. It's edgy stuff.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.idwpublishing.com

History of the Marvel Univers #1 ★½

Marvel

$3.99, color, 48 pgs.
Writers: Patrick Duke, Kevin Garcia, Jacob Rougemont, Roger Ott; Artists: Various

In this one-shot, The Watcher takes it upon himself to tell us the story of the "marvels" (*i.e.*, super-heroes). Uatu, what happened to you?

The *What If?* back-up series "Untold Tales from the Marvel Universe" told epic tales from Marvel's prehistory involving The Celestials and The Kree. The *Marvel Universe* mini-series shared the previously unrevealed story of The Monster Hunters. Here, we get one panel of The Invaders, then cut to The Fantastic Four.

If The Watcher wants to tell us the history of the marvels, why is he skipping the *entire* Golden Age? Where are The Agents of Atlas? Where's The Blue Marvel? Where's The First Line (from Marvel's "lost generation"?) This isn't the history of the marvels as much as it's a convenient history of *currently* popular characters.

If I were The Watcher, I'd focus on a few different things. I'd probably lose a few panels about Peter Parker's love life in order to mention "The Celestial Madonna Saga" or "The Avengers-Defenders War."

They don't even use the phrase "contest of champions" when describing *The Contest of Champions*. Epic fail.

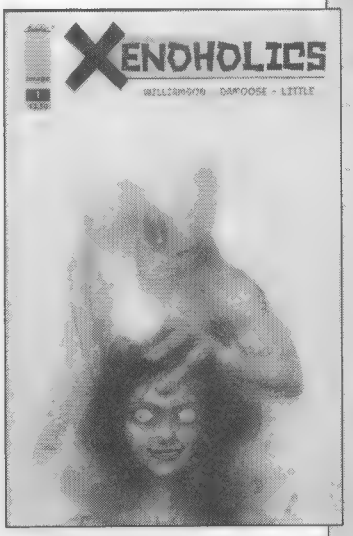
— Jack Abramowitz

www.marvel.com

Xenoholics #1 ★★½

Image

$3.50, color, 32 pgs.
Writer: Joshua Williamson
Artist: Seth Damoose



For most people, being abducted by aliens would be an experience. For some, it's apparently an addiction, which is where "Xenoholics Anonymous" comes in. Bob is a husband and father whose abduction experience destroys both his marriage and career. To come to terms with his loss, he joins a support group to connect with others who have encountered alien lifeforms. The group is a cast of characters from all backgrounds, ranging from a happy homemaker to a pop-star diva.

Although the group's goal is that people share their abduction stories, some members have their own agenda. At least one is lying about being abducted, while Professor Campbell, the leader of the group, is more than he appears to be.

No alien-abduction story would be complete without a conspiracy behind it, and plenty of hints are given, including a brief teaser of events to come in a future issue. By the end of the first chapter, evidence surfaces that makes "plausible deniability" difficult, if not downright impossible, because it's witnessed by thousands of people.

— Christopher Galvan

www.imagecomics.com

All-New Batman: The Brave and the Bold #8 ★★★

DC

$2.99, color, 40 pgs.
Writer: Sholly Fisch
Artists: Rick Burchett, Dan Davis

Batman teams with Aquaman in a quest for an ancient artifact that will help free the ghost pirate Captain Fear.

During the search, the heroes also encounter The Fisherman and Black Manta, while Aquaman tries to avoid dealing with "boring" administrative duties from his royal advisor Vulko. (They include reviewing quarterly estimates of plankton production.)

Fisch and Burchett successfully capture the voice of the show, with the same kind of humorous dialogue a viewer sees on a typical episode of the animated series.

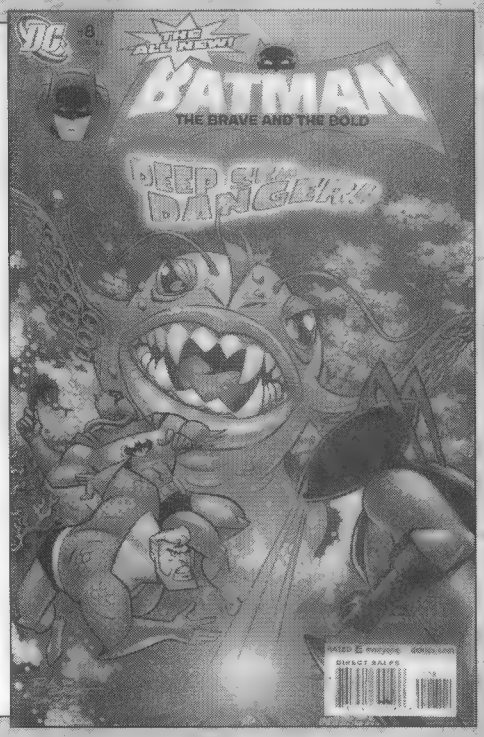
This provides a fun alternative for both adults and kids looking for a Batman title that is a little less intense.

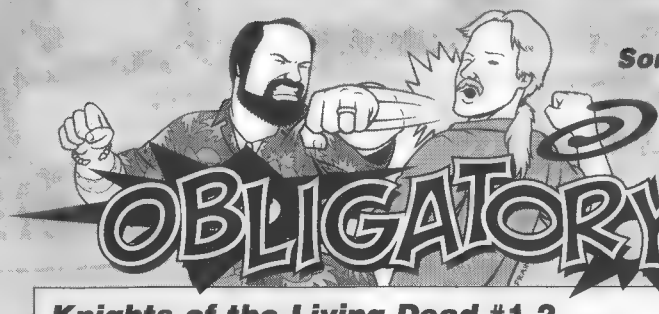
For some readers, the most entertaining part of the issue may be the advertising insert sponsored by Subway Sandwiches. It features a trio of NFL players helping The Justice League capture Black Manta and Ocean Master.

When the fleeing Black Manta steals a player's sandwich as a consolation prize, older readers may be reminded of Hostess' comic-book ads in the 1970s.

— Christopher Galvan

www.dccomics.com





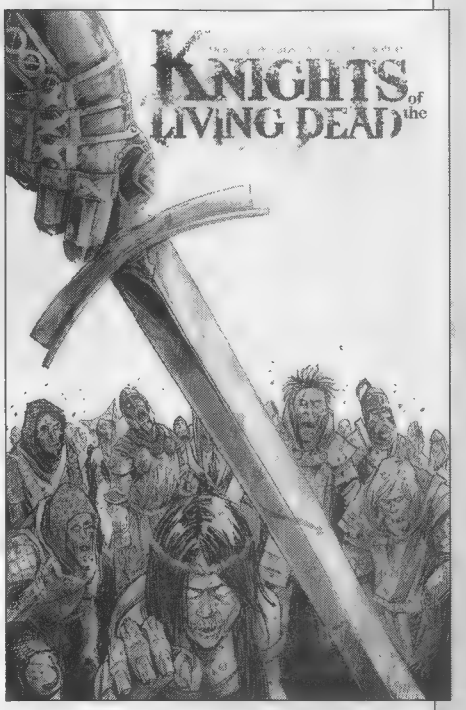
Sometimes our reviewers just don't agree!

OBLIGATORY FIGHT SCENE!

Knights of the Living Dead #1-2

Slave Labor Graphics

#1: Free, b/w, 22 pgs.; #2: 99¢, b/w, 34 pgs.
Both available via digital download @ *www.slgcomic.com*
Writer: Ron Wolfe; Artist: Dusty Higgins
Reviewed by John Petty and Jim Johnson



Jim Johnson: I have to admit, if I'd had to pay money for the first issue, I would have been none too happy. This King Arthur-zombie mashup starts off at a near glacial pace, the dialogue needs to be tightened, and the art is crude. Faint praise, perhaps, but the first issue introduces the idea of an undead army converging on Camelot and succeeds in making just enough of a case for willingly handing over a buck for the second. This would have gone back on the shelf, if it had been a $3 or $4 print comic; but — at only $1 for the pair — I'm willing to give this a chance that I wouldn't have otherwise. Even a cranky cheapskate like you must have appreciated that.

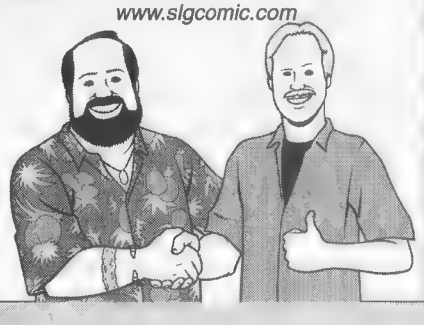
John Petty: You know, there are times when even free is too expensive, and this is a great example. What we have here is, not so much a story, as it is an idea: an idea that, throughout more than 50 pages, remains horribly undeveloped and unrealized. What story there is — zombies attacking Camelot — can be summed up by the title of the piece; once you've read that, you know all you need to know and need not bother actually spending time with these issues. I remember the glory days of SLG, when it published such titles as *It's Science with Dr. Radium*, *Little Gloomy*, and *Milk and Cheese*. Those were comics worth reading, and it's sad to see a once-innovative publishing house brought this low. From an almost nonexistent script to amateurish art, this is a title to avoid.

Johnson: In a pre-digital world, I *would* have avoided this, but *that's* my point. Online distribution, especially the way SLG has structured this release, allows for potential readers to sample this without making a real investment. The story *does* start to pick up near the end of the second issue, and, while I can't ignore this series' shortcomings on a critical level, I can overlook them, for now, as a consumer who isn't being asked to make a trip to the comics store to pay several times the online price. The creators have catching up to do with this story, but, at worst, readers aren't out $15 or $20 at the end, if they don't.

Petty: Just because it's free doesn't mean it's worth the price. I hear what you're saying, but my point is that this should never have been released in the shape it's in. It's sloppy, amateurish, and poorly realized. There's little evidence that thought has gone into this beyond, "Zombie Lancelot ... cool," and that's not enough to justify my investment of time *or* money in this project. Frankly, if this were my first experience with an SLG publication, I'd give the entire line a wide berth in the future, since this is so badly done. The realities of digital distribution that you so glowingly praise shouldn't give publishers an excuse to release poor products, as is the case here. It should allow them to present quality work to an even wider audience. SLG would be better off releasing reprints of *Dr. Radium* rather than cluttering bandwidth with this.

ARTHUR...
I hoped in desperation to redirect the arrow of his resolve.
THERE WILL BE NO RESCUE OF THE QUEEN...
... SAVE BY YOUR OWN ACTION.

www.slgcomic.com



Tour of the INDIES

INDEPENDENT AND SMALL PRESS REVIEWS

Simpsons Comics #183

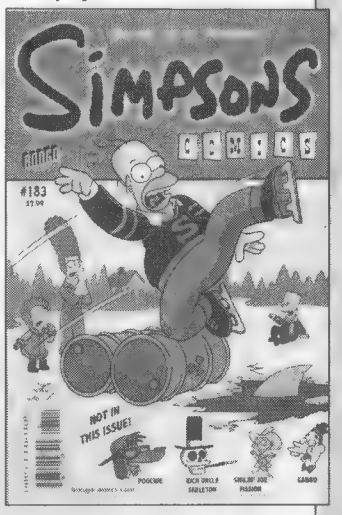
★★★½

Bongo

$2.99, color, 32 pgs.

Writer: Ian Boothby

Artists: Stan Goldberg, Andrew Pepoy



Starting with a great homage cover, this issue is a hilarious parody of *Archie Comics*, with Bart and the *Simpsons* cast reimagined as the gang from Riverdale. *Simpsons* writer Ian Boothby teams up with legendary Archie artist Stan Goldberg to combine both franchises into one seriously funny story.

In typical Archie fashion, "Bartchie" has to save the Chock'lit Squishee Shoppe from demolition and simultaneously deal with the dilemma of scheduling dates with two girls for the same night. The laughs continue with such name changes as Big Ethel's becoming "Big Menthol," along with a humorous theory on the true identity of Jughead's father. Boothby even takes a couple of digs at last year's "Archie Gets Married" storyline. (In Bartchie's version of these alternate timelines, the results are not nearly as romantic as Archie would have imagined.)

Bongo and Archie are two publishers that have one focal value in common: Both publish fun, entertaining comics that rarely disappoint. The only improvement lacking was that Marge, barely seen in this issue, would have made a great Miss Grundy.

— Christopher Galvan

www.bongocomics.com

Anya's Ghost

★★★★

First Second

$15.99, b/w, 224 pgs.

Writer and artist: Vera Brosgol

Anya and her family emigrated from Russia when she was child and she spent years trying to become an average American teen. To her, that means belonging to the popular crowd and being anyone but herself. Fuming over her poor lot in life, she falls down a hole and meets the ghost of a teenager named Emily. At first, Anya is reluctant to accept Emily's friendship, but having a ghost around proves to have its benefits — until Emily starts to bully Anya and threaten her family. Anya must discover how to get rid of the violent ghost by drawing on her own inner strength.

Vera Brosgol does a masterful job in character development with strong, believable characters, perfect pacing, and unpredictable, original plot. The art flows as smoothly as her storytelling, and her style is all about rounded curves and the power of grayscale. *Anya's Ghost* is a perfect graphic novel.

— Whitney Grace

www.firstsecondbooks.com

ISBN: 978-1596435520

Flash Gordon: Zeitgeist #1 ★★★½

Dynamite
$1, color, 32 pgs.
Writers: Alex Ross, Eric Trautman
Artists: Ross, Daniel Indro

Leave it to Alex Ross to resurrect another dormant property — Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon.*

Unlike the 2007-08 TV series and poor 1996 cartoon, Ross remains true to *Gordon*'s Raymond roots and is respectful of the original material. For starters, it occurs in 1934 (the year the comic strip began), rather than today.

Ming The Merciless attacks Earth in order to complete his plans of universal domination.

He does it this way because his vizier informs him his agents on Earth believe Earthmen are too volatile. So Ming wants to show off his might. Ming has plenty of sympathizers on Earth who'd like to join him, one being ... well, that would be telling.

A sketchbook section is printed after the main story, showing off Ross' character designs.

This series has a serious tone; those looking for camp should rent the 1980 film.

Let's hope Ross can eventually dynamite Flash's campy image the way Steve Englehart, Marshall Rogers, Frank Miller, and others did with Batman.

You can't go wrong with Ross — especially for $1!

— Kurt Anthony Krug
www.dynamite.net

Omega Paradox #0 ★★½

Moonstone
$1.99, color, 16 pgs.
Writer: Ian Ng
Artists: Mark Sparacio, Abe Melendez Rivera

Mark Sparacio has released this "zero" issue as a preview of his first creator-owned series. As a science fiction story, it starts out in an unusual setting: a university library located on an alien planet. The story begins with a team of five people being ambushed by a gang of aliens, followed by the revelation that one of their allies is not who he claims to be.

The team is led by a mysterious character called "The Master," although one member refers to him as "Father." Although he may remind readers of The X-Men's Charles Xavier, this leader takes a no-nonsense approach to ending dissension within the ranks, as evidenced by the last couple pages.

There is plenty of action to compel readers to check out the upcoming series, which will focus on the team's search for "a man who may hold the key to keeping the universe together," according to the book's Facebook page.

Fans that have enjoyed Sparacio's ***CBG*** covers will be very pleased with his interior art, and Rivera's colors further enhance the book.

— Christopher Galvan
www.moonstonepublishing.com

Peanuts #0 ★★★

Boom!/Kaboom!
$1, color, 24 pgs.
Writers: Charles Schulz, Ron Zormna, Vicki Scott
Artists: Schulz, Zorman, Scott, Paige Braddock

Boom's kid-friendly imprint *Kaboom!* has released a zero-issue preview of the *Peanuts* ongoing series that is starting in January. Considering the legacy of a comic strip that was published every day for almost 50 years, expectations are high for this series.

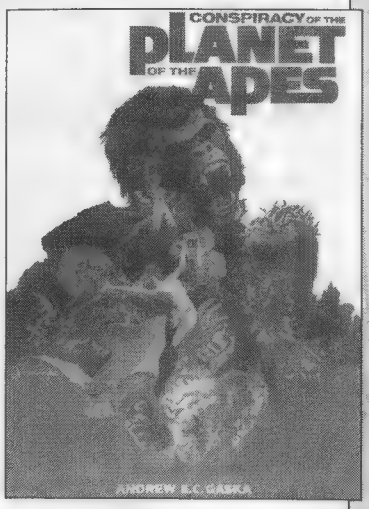
The issue contains both new and reprinted material. In addition to the two original stories, some classic Sunday strips are included, as well as a preview of the original graphic novel *Happiness Is a Warm Blanket, Charlie Brown.* The new stories are faithful to Charles Schulz' vision of the characters, and Ron Zorman's art often looks almost indistinguishable from that of Schulz.

Boom once again uses the $1 price point to pull in new readers with this introductory issue. Long-time fans of the original strip will be pleased to see new adventures of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Woodstock, and the rest of the gang. However, the $3.99 cover price on future issues may discourage those same readers, if reprint material continues to occupy a portion of each issue.

— Christopher Galvan
www.boom-studios.com

Conspiracy of the Planet of the Apes ★★★

Archaia
$24.99, color, 272 pgs.
Writer: Andrew E.C. Gaska
Artists: Jim Steranko, *et al.*



Before you read this book, you will it enjoy it better and understand it more if you watch 1968's *Planet of the Apes*, starring Charlton Heston.

Another caveat: This is a prose novel with single-page illustrations by such well-known comic-book artists as Jim Steranko, Joe Jusko, Matt Busch, Dave Dorman, and Ken Kelly.

This is a behind-the-scenes look from different perspectives at the events of the original movie. Taylor is more of a supporting character. Andrew E.C. Gaska focuses more on Landon and fleshes him out. It's confirmed that Landon and Lt. Stewart (the female astronaut) had a thing going on, providing plenty of back-story material.

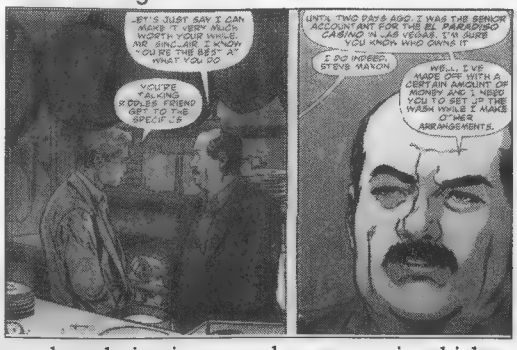
Gaska also explains in great detail more about the hierarchy of the Apes' society. He spotlights Cornelius, Zira, and Dr. Zaius in a tale with taut pacing. Gaska writes with a sense of history and respects the continuity of the *Apes* mythos as he adds to it. For die-hard *Apes* fans.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.archaia.com
ISBN: 978-1936393-367

The Rinse #1 ★★★

Boom! Studios
$1, color, 24 pgs.
Writer: Gary Phillips
Artist: Marc Laming


LET'S JUST SAY I CAN MAKE IT VERY MUCH WORTH YOUR WHILE, MR. SINCLAIR. I KNOW YOU'RE THE BEST AT WHAT YOU DO.
YOU'RE TALKING FIDDLES FRIEND GET TO THE SPECIFICS.
UNTIL TWO DAYS AGO, I WAS THE SENIOR ACCOUNTANT FOR THE EL PARAISO CASINO 'N LAS VEGAS. I'M SURE YOU KNOW WHO OWNS IT.
I DO INDEED, STEVE MANON.
WELL... I'VE MADE OFF WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MONEY AND I NEED YOU TO SET UP THE WASH WHILE I MAKE OTHER ARRANGEMENTS.

Money laundering is a complex process in which "dirty" or illegally gained money is moved to a "clean" source, such as real estate or a cash-based business. Jeff Sinclair is a "laundryman," a person who specializes in moving dirty money to more legal sources. Jeff is a consummate professional in his field, but his life becomes complicated when he comes to the aid of a crooked accountant who stole a large sum of money from a powerful casino owner.

An interesting aspect of the story is that, in the middle of a high-tech criminal underground, Jeff chooses to use low-tech methods to ply his trade. In order to avoid the technology utilized by law enforcement to detect laundering activity, Jeff uses handwritten notes and disposable cell phones as his main tools in moving money to different cities and people.

Boom! gets extra credit for releasing the introductory issue for only $1, making it easier for readers on a budget to try this series. Fans of crime-themed comics should enjoy this new series.

— Christopher Galvan

www.boomstudios.com

Penny for Your Soul Vol. 1: War ★★½

Big Dog Ink
$19.99, color, 188 pgs.
Writer: Tom Hutchison
Artists: J.B. Neto, Mike Vosburg

At first glance, you'd swear this title was part of Zenescope's stable of titles: extrapolating familiar characters and stories into a modern setting. That's especially the case with Joe Jusko art rocking the cover. However, credit goes to Big Dog Ink, not Zenescope. *Penny for Your Soul* is the fledging publisher's flagship title.

Writer and creator Tom Hutchison puts Mary Magdalene, Jesus Christ, Lucifer, and scores of angels and demons in Las Vegas. To gain entry into the hotel Eternity — run by Mary Magdalene and Danica, Lucifer's granddaughter — you have to sell your soul. (It's reminiscent of evil law firm Wolfram & Hart in Joss Whedon's *Angel* TV series.) The Apocalypse erupts, as Mary Magdalene and Danica battle Lucifer with Jesus straddling the fence.

The art is surprisingly good, consistent, and professional-looking for an independent title. Props to J.B. Neto. The project is a daringly different take on the *Bible*. There's plenty of violence, gore, foul language, and profanity. **Warning:** Those who object to non-orthodox fantasizing about religion will not enjoy this project.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.bigdogcomics.com
ISBN: 9781450766845

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BOUND For Glory

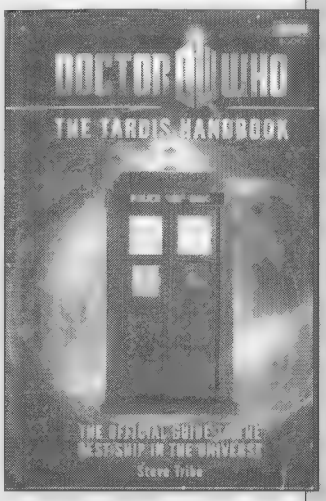
TRADE PAPERBACK AND GRAPHIC NOVEL REVIEWS

PICK OF THE MONTH TPB

Doctor Who: The TARDIS Handbook

★★★

BBC Books
$19.99, color, 128 pgs.
Writer: Steve Tribe



Here's a handy reference for the *Doctor Who* aficionado — a small, blue book about everyone's favorite time-and-space-traveling blue box. In some ways, the book is likewise bigger on the inside.

OK, it's not completely about the TARDIS — much of it is about the device's long parade of occupants. But if you want to see a side-by-side comparison of TARDISes from 1963 to the present or a comprehensive list of devices found on board, this is the place to go.

As would be expected, this volume focuses heavily on the current, 11th Doctor, played by Matt Smith, but there are healthy doses of previous Doctors and such companions as Tegan, Rose, and Liz. There are plot synopses of episodes from throughout the series' decades-long run. They may not be presented in linear order, but, then again, neither is the show.

There is also a somewhat thicker companion volume, *The Dalek Handbook*, focusing on The Doctor's mortal enemies. Between the two, even en-*Who*-thiasts with the most well stocked of libraries will find new insights on their favorite time traveler.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.randomhouse.co.uk
ISBN 978-184607986-3

Amazing Spider-Man: The Extremist

★★★★

Marvel
$15.99, color, 144 pgs.
Writer: Fred Van Lente
Artists: Javier Rodriguez, *et al.*

Not a day goes by that *something* negative doesn't happen to Peter Parker, so, when a super-powered killer shows up and targets Spider-Man's enemies, things get interesting. Known as The Extremist, the killer has the mission of murdering everyone who opposes Spider-Man. Everyone's favorite Spidey-hater, J. Jonah Jameson, is #1 on the list. This story is followed by a team-up of Mary Jane and The Black Cat. They combine their strengths to save Spider-Man from mad scientist and plastic surgeon Doc Tramma, who surgically alters her patients to have super-abilities.

As Spider-Man comics go, the usual "saving my enemy from death" and "unlikely team-up" storyline are spiced up with new twists taken from such contemporary issues as helicopter parents, web blog popularity, Fox News, and North Korean spies. The Spider-Man reboot's purpose was to revitalize stories and characters that had drifted too far from their original incarnations. While Spider-Man could have encountered these situations in his former life, they would have been dull; the new approach has an engaging edge, making it more akin to readers' everyday experiences — except for the super-powered villain and psycho plastic surgeon.

— Whitney Grace

Collects *Web of Spider-Man* #8-12
www.marvel.com
ISBN: 978-0785156703

Angel Omnibus

★★★

Dark Horse

$24.99, color, 480 pgs.

Writers: Joss Whedon, Christopher Golden, *et al.*

Artists: Mel Rubi, Eric Powell, *et al.*

Dark Horse celebrates regaining the licensing rights to Joss Whedon's *Angel* by collecting all of the *Angel* comic book stories published under its roof in an omnibus edition. You can appreciate the difficulty Christopher Golden had writing the initial series when the TV show was in its first season (similar to Jo Duffy and company writing *Star Wars* comics for Marvel in the 1980s before George Lucas finished all three films).

One thing Golden did an excellent job of was smoothing out the rough edges between the death of Doyle and the coming of Wesley. Remember, on the show, Det. Kate Lockley didn't bat an eye when she saw Wesley working for Angel, but didn't ask where Doyle is. Golden takes care of that.

Whedon writes a tale where Angel battles Zheng, a Chinese vampire whom he's encountered before. Zheng has some henchmen with him that includes a guy who looks like Boba Fett. Mel Rubi's artistry is kinetic, firing on all cylinders, and does an excellent likeness of Charisma Carpenter, who played Cordelia.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *Angel* #1-14, #17, *Angel: Long Night's Journey* #1-4, *Dark Horse Presents* #153-155, *Dark Horse Extra* #25-28, and *Angel: Point of Order* #1.

www.darkhorse.com

ISBN: 978-1-59582-706-7

Garden

★★

PictureBox

$24.95, b/w, 328 pgs.

Writer and artist: Yuichi Yokoyama

If you want proof that comics can be used to tell *any* type of story, take a gander at *Garden*. A group of friends visit a garden, only to find it closed. They sneak in and discover an artificial landscape of machines, geometric shapes, objects that defy physics, and optical illusions. The entire story consists of the friends traveling through the non-organic garden describing what they see. It is a simple plot made complex by the straight-lined, monochromatic drawings. Yokoyama is an atypical manga artist, relying more on mathematical design than smooth-flowing character designs.

His style is somehow reminiscent of those of Osamu Tezuka and Shotaro Ishinomori — it has a quality of the 1960s that is not replicated in most of today's manga. For what it is, *Garden* demonstrates how to approach graphic novels from a different angle. Storywise, it will only appeal to a select audience — those who take delight from mathematics and engineering — but it lacks a mainstream tone. Moreover, it's never clear just how many characters there are. This is the type of graphic novel you'd expect to find in galleries featuring overpriced, *avant-garde* art.

— Whitney Grace

www.pictureboxinc.com

ISBN: 978-0982632710

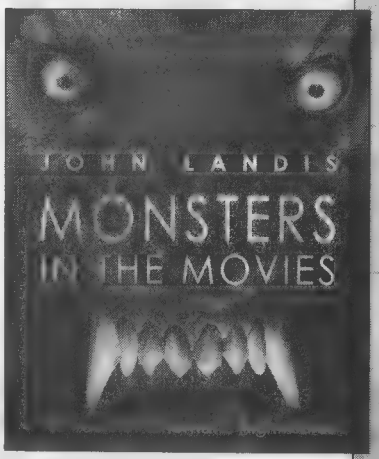
Monsters in the Movies

★★★½

DK

$45, color, 319 pgs.

Writer: John Landis



John Landis — the director of such projects as *National Lampoon's Animal House, An American Werewolf in London,* Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video, and several Eddie Murphy films — provides a pictorial history of monsters in the movies.

Landis states in his introduction that this isn't an encyclopedia of every monster movie ever made, nor is it meant to be a scholarly work. In Landis' words, he wrote this book because he thought the monsters featured are "cool."

He starts off with Dracula — cataloging the best and worst actors to play the undead count — and other vampires, even vampire hunters. He rips on bad movies with snarky one-liners. For instance, of 2004's *Van Helsing* with Hugh Jackman — Landis writes, "Indiana Jones he is not."

Other chapters include entries for werewolves, zombies, mad scientists, mummies, apes, scary children, killer dolls, space aliens, human monsters (Jack the Ripper), even the devil, and so on. Landis also interviews horror icon Christopher Lee, directors Sam Raimi and John Carpenter, and makeup artist Rick Baker. It's fun.

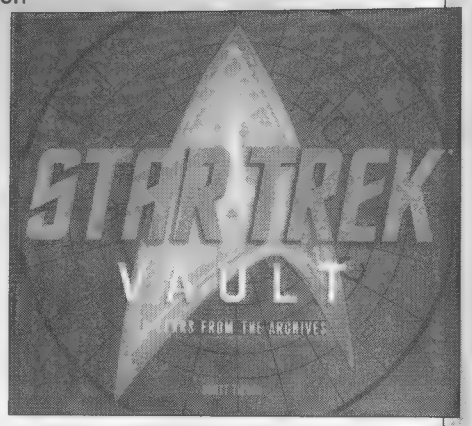
— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.dk.com

ISBN: 9780756683702

Star Trek Vault ★★★

Abrams
$40, color, 130 pgs.
Writer: Scott Tipton



This book is a fun overview of all things *Trek*. Well, *most* things *Trek*. The original series, the spin-offs, and the first two film series are represented. Brownie points for including the animated series. The only thing conspicuously absent is the rebooted film franchise. Among the main features and copious photos are reproductions of paraphernalia from the various *Trek* eras. These include trading cards, stickers, and even miniature replicas of a coloring book and a pennant.

Sidebars cover a wide variety of *Trek*iana, from comic books to the show's prescience when it comes to technology. Mego action figures and real-life astronauts inspired by the cast are all on hand.

Though there are no real surprises for long-time fans, this is a pleasant bit of reading.

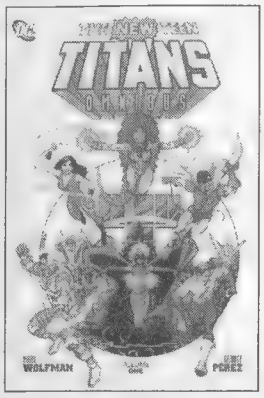
Note: Despite the similarity in name and format, *Star Trek Vault* is not by the same publisher as *Marvel Vault* and *DC Vault*. The former is a more convenient shape, but the latter feel more jam-packed with goodies. (I haven't counted the inserts; it's just an impression.)

— Jack Abramowitz

www.abramsbooks.com
ISBN 978-141970075-0

The New Teen Titans Omnibus Vol. 1 ★★★½

DC
$74, color, 687 pgs.
Writer: Marv Wolfman
Artists: George Pérez, Romeo Tanghal



According to writer and co-creator Marv Wolfman in his introduction, *The New Teen Titans* was never supposed to succeed. He had expected it to go no further than six issues. However, it became DC's best-selling title in the early 1980s, rivaling Marvel's *X-Men*.

Wolfman made sidekicks characters people cared about. He wrote "kiddie super-heroes" the way he thought they should be portrayed. Many had parental issues and were rebellious. Even dutiful Robin had a falling-out with Batman. Wolfman gave each Titan a personality, paving the way for Robin to become Nightwing (and later Batman) and Kid Flash to become The Flash. These identity switches might never have happened, were it not for this series.

As for the art, how could readers go wrong with George Pérez? His work — inked by Romeo Tanghal — got better and better as the series went. Silver Age artist Curt Swan contributes a chapter, as well. The price may be steep but the resultant book is worth it.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *DC Comics Presents* #26, *The New Teen Titans* #1-20, *Tales of the New Teen Titans* #1-4.

www.dccomics.com
ISBN: 9781451627251

Archie & Friends: Night at the Comic Shop ★★★½

Archie Comics
$9.95, color, 128 pgs.
Writer: Fernando Ruiz; Artists: Ruiz, Bill Galvan

Archie, Betty, Jughead, and Veronica visit their friend Chuck at his part-time job at the local comic-book shop. They start to discuss their favorite comics, when a meteor crashes into the shop. The meteor opens an inter-dimensional gateway, releasing a slew of Archie Comics characters into Riverdale. The gang teams up to get everyone back to his or her respective world. Later, the meteor reopens the portals, and Archie and his friends must team up with the comic-book characters to set things right.

This graphic novel is a journey through Archie Comics' past. Such characters as Cosmo the Merry Martian, Ginger, Super Duck, Sam Hill Private Eye, Kardak the Mystic, and many more make their first comics appearances in decades. The additional characters add randomness to the usually predictable Archie comics. However, there are *so* many characters that the cameos are often distracting, especially for readers unfamiliar with the old titles. From another viewpoint, it's a detailed history of the publishing house. There's also a description of each title, making it a great book for those interested in comics history.

— Whitney Grace

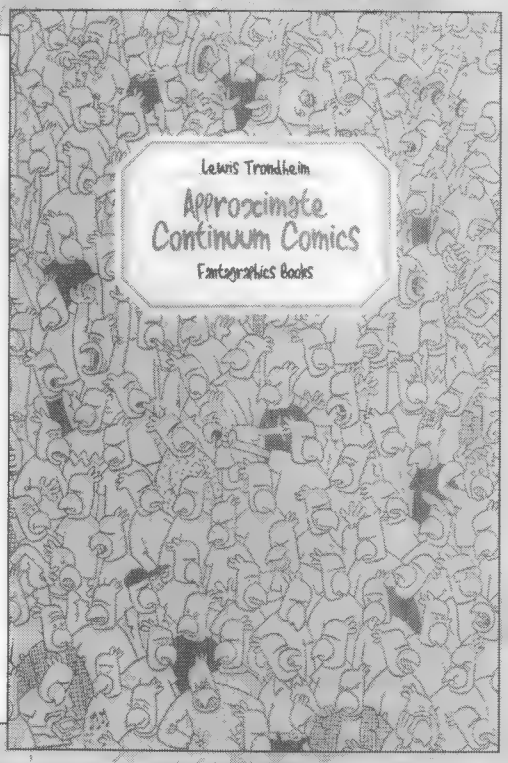
www.archiecomics.com
ISBN: 978-1879794696

Approximate Continuum Comics ★★★½

Fantagraphics

$18.99, b/w, 160 pgs.

Writer and artist: Lewis Trondheim



Comics are the perfect medium for an autobiography, and French comics creator Lewis Trondheim describes two crucial years in his life.

He takes a humorous approach to his life, as he outlines his transition from a bachelor and struggling cartoonist to a family man at the start of his world-famous career.

He deals with family, co-workers, and his pessimistic self.

At times, he is his own worst enemy and fights inner demons, but he discovers that, while the world sucks, if you find what makes you happy, it's a tolerable existence.

Trondheim uses animal caricatures to portray the people in his world.

His drawings are non-threatening cartoons but depict real-life situations that any empathetic reader will recognize. This approach to storytelling is as old as *Aesop's Fables*, and Trondheim's continuation of the tradition is a tribute to storytelling.

All comics fans understand the potential of the medium, but few are aware of the gems that hide in France.

— Whitney Grace

www.fantagraphics.com

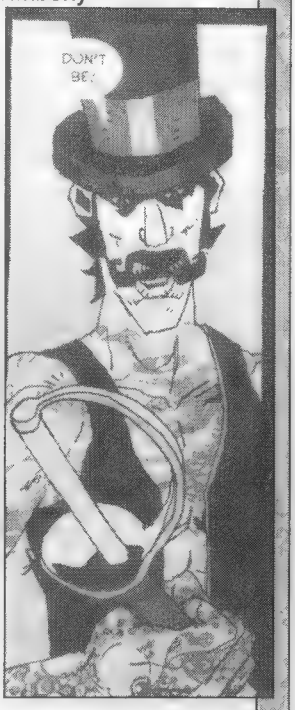
ISBN: 978-1606994108

Something Wicked This Way Comics: The Authorized Adaptation ½★

Hill and Wang

$30, b/w, 144 pgs.

Writer: Ray Bradbury; Artist: Ron Wimberly



Ray Bradbury is a legendary writer. His stories and novels have been adapted into movies, TV shows, and, of course, comic books. One of his works now falls into the latter category; while the 1962 novel (two boys realize the traveling carnival that visits their town reeks of dark magic) is a classic, the graphic-novel version fails to impress.

Bradbury authorized Ron Wimberly to transform to a graphic novel his tale of the boys' encounter with the evil Mr. Dark, who runs the carnival — and of the power of a father's guiding hand and knowledge. Unfortunately, as often occurs when prose novels are adapted to the graphic-novel format, Wimberly has left things out. The writing is good, primarily because of the source material, but significant details are gone — making this a shadow of the true novel. Moreover, the art comes across as no better than that found in amateurs' web comics. This boils down to a case of "Is the original better than the adaptation?" Stick with Bradbury's original.

— Whitney Grace

http://us.macmillan.com/hillandwang.aspx

ISBN: 978-0809087464

Classic G.I. Joe Vol. 12 ★★

IDW

$24.99, color, 240 pgs.

Writers: Larry Hama, Herb Trimpe

Artists: Trimpe, *et al.*

Larry Hama shook things up by killing several characters in *G.I. Joe, A Real American Hero* — radical for what was considered a "kids' comic," since it was based on a toy line. The best story in this collection involves Sneak Peak's being killed in action and the promise Dusty makes to him and his mother. (This same story ties into Hama's current *G.I. Joe* series at IDW, picking up from the point at which the Marvel series was canceled in 1994.)

Sadly, stories in this volume go downhill from there. When these stories saw print (circa 1991-92), the cartoon was no longer airing and plenty of unrealistic elements were introduced in the toy line to keep it selling. Hama implemented some of those elements, such as Flint heading up the Eco-Squad, an environmentally conscious team of Joes. (Mercifully, that didn't last long.)

Snake-Eyes, the most popular character, undergoes several costume changes in this volume to keep up with the number of action figures released. What's jarring is that there was no consistent artist on the title, which made it difficult to distinguish character from character, especially when they were drawn in new costumes.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

Reprints: *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* #111-123

www.idwpublishing.com

ISBN: 978-1600109720

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CHRIS ZIMMERMAN
Chris Zimmerman is a self professed *otaku*, having grown up reading manga since he was 10.
E-mail Chris at: ***vardimiss@hotmail.com***

Mangaman ★★★½

Houghton Mifflin
$19.99, b/w, 148 pgs.
Writer: Barry Lyga
Artist: Colleen Doran

Due to an experiment gone awry, Ryoko has been transported from his dimension to what is ostensibly ours. Ryoko's home, however, is in the manga style, while the dimension he is visiting is in the American style. This has greater ramifications than serving as a visual cue for readers. When Ryoko manifests manga conventions, inhabitants of the other dimension can see his eyes bug out, his speed lines, and more. And the wacky high jinks of a shonen manga, including super-human martial-arts fights, are commonplace in Ryoko's world.

It is perhaps unlikely that Ryoko would form such a profound relationship with Marissa, who is an outcast of her own devising. But he does — and the things he shows her cast doubt, not just on whether her world is our own, but on the nature of reality itself.

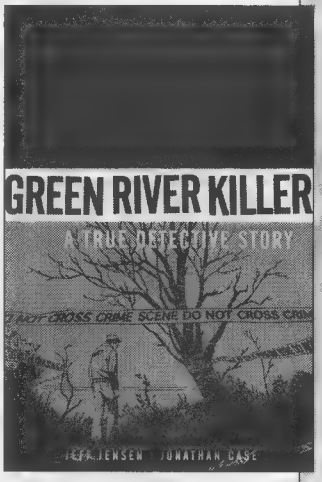
Mangaman seamlessly blends two worlds — not unlike the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* — down to the fact that different laws of physics apply to different individuals. It then goes a step beyond by providing food for thought about the world of comics and that of our own.

— Jack Abramowitz

www.hmhbooks.com
ISBN 978-054742315-9

Green River Killer: A True Detective Story ★★★

Dark Horse
$24.99, color, 240 pgs.
Writer: Jeff Jensen; Artist: Jonathan Case



This graphic novel is not intended to be a memoir, nor is it totally accurate from a historical perspective (some names were changed and the like), according to the author's notes at the end.

It chronicles the Seattle Police Department's decades-long manhunt for Gary Ridgway, aka The Green River Killer, who has more confirmed kills to his name than any other serial killer in American history, including Ted Bundy. There are already plenty of books and movies about Ridgway — currently serving 48 life sentences without parole.

However, what makes this version of The Green River Killer's activities unusual is that it's written by *Entertainment Weekly* journalist Jeff Jensen, whose father (Detective Tom Jensen) worked on this case for almost 20 years. Jensen wrote this as a tribute to his father, who worked tirelessly to bring Ridgway to justice.

Jensen shows how this case took its toll on his father, as time passed. He interviewed many people involved in this case, including Ridgway himself. What makes this interpretation work is that it *doesn't* come off as exploitative, clichéd, or sensationalized.

— Kurt Anthony Krug

www.darkhorse.com
ISBN: 978-1595825605

Codename Sailor V Vol. 1 ★★★

Kodansha Comics
$10.99, b/w, 272 pgs.
Writer and artist: Naoko Takeuchi

Before *Sailor Moon* made comics history, Naoko Takeuchi created *Codename Sailor V*, a prequel to the popular sailor-soldier series. It concentrates on Minako Aino in her early crime-fighting days as Sailor V, Champion of Justice. She becomes Sailor V when a talking white cat appears out of nowhere to give her a crescent-shaped compact mirror that transforms her into the super-heroine. Sailor V is charged with protecting the Earth from dark forces. Along with heightened combat skills, Minako can also create magical disguises.

While Takeuchi is renowned for her expert storytelling, this early work doesn't establish much in the way of plot. Minako is a 13-year-old girl obsessed with boys, fashion, love, and videogames. She is normal by *shojo* (girl) comics standards and her alter ego is the same, so she does not come off as original until readers see how she slowly starts to mature and take her hero duties seriously. Another flaw is that readers aren't told what her purpose is — other than being a Champion of Justice. Who, exactly, is her enemy? Each chapter follows the same formula, but that will be broken in future volumes.

This example of Takeuchi's early work displays a light, bubbly, and cheerful quality in her style. It's the perfect complement to the innocence in Minako. *Sailor V* was never officially released in English, until Kodansha published it. It's more than 15 years too late to hit the peak of *Sailor Moon's* popularity, but this was worth the wait.

— Whitney Grace

www.kodanshacomics.com
ISBN: 978-1935429777

Pretty Guardian Sailor Moon Vol. 1 ★★★★

Kodansha Comics
$10.99, b/w, 240 pgs.
Writer and artist: Naoko Takeuchi

Usagi Tsukino is a 14-year-old in middle school. She's constantly late and gets bad grades, but, after she saves a talking cat named Luna, her ordinary life is over. Luna gives her a broach and, after yelling, "Moon Prism Power, Make-Up!" she transforms into Sailor Moon, the Guardian of Love and Beauty. She is charged with fighting the forces of darkness and finding the Moon Princess. She is joined by other sailor-suited warriors — Sailors Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter — an eclectic group whose members each add their own strengths to the story. While Sailor Moon learns how to become the ideal super-heroine, the mysterious Tuxedo Mask is always there to save her. Usagi struggles to understand her growing attraction and connection to the mysterious masked man.

Takeuchi's art is regarded as the epitome of *shojo* (girl) manga in the 1990s-2000s. As the manga progresses, it only gets more intricate and compelling, as characters mature into strong, powerful warriors. Takeuchi's style combines *shojo* and *shonen* (boy) elements, taking the best of both to create a style that still continues to influence manga artists.

Sailor Moon was groundbreaking Japanese manga, and the U.S. Kodansha has released the definite edition. Tokyopop originally released it, but, while much of the Japanese script had been preserved, it was translated with an American audience in mind. When Kodansha acquired the translation rights, it updated the content and kept the Japanese references. The series doesn't read as smoothly, but readers get the ideal translation. It should be in every comics collection for both its entertainment and historical value.

— Whitney Grace

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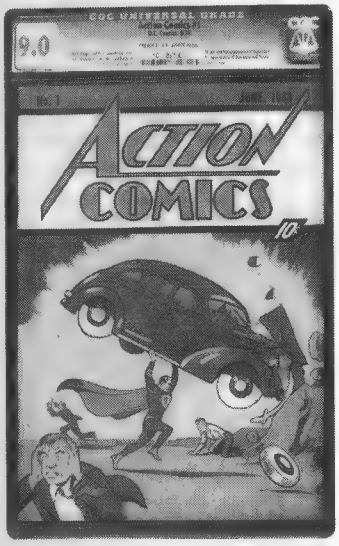
Starting a new club

ComicConnect.com sells *Action* #1 for $2.16 million

by **BRENT FRANKENHOFF**



Superman's first appearance has started a new club all its own, closing at $2.16 million Nov. 30. When ***CBG*** #1686 was going to press that day, ComicConnect.com had just hours to go in its online auction. With major media attention on the sale of a copy of *Action Comics* #1 (Jun 38), CGC-graded 9.0, and previously part of actor Nicolas Cage's collection, expectations were that a new record was in the making.

As reported last issue, the issue had already set a record for the highest price offered for a comic book, with a Nov. 29 bid of $1,552,000, which topped all other back-issue prices.

This particular copy of the comic book that started comics' Golden Age had been stolen several years ago but was recovered earlier in 2011 from a storage locker and later graded and consigned to ComicConnect.com. Going by specific marks on the book, ComicConnect.com Co-Founders Vincent Zurzolo and Stephen Fishler were able to identify it as coming from Cage's collection and as an issue they had sold to the actor a number of years earlier.

While *Action* #1 now appears to have the top spot again with more than a half-million dollars of value separating it from its closest competitor, there's another copy of the book, CGC-graded 8.5, that ComicConnect.com sold in 2010 for $1.5 million.

It's the fourth comic book sold by ComicConnect.com in the $1 million+ range. In addition to the 8.5 copy, the firm first set a record in 2010 with the $1 million sale of a CGC 8.0 copy of *Action* #1. A year later, ComicConnect sold the first Silver Age comic book to exceed $1 million — a CGC-graded 9.6 copy of *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (Aug 62) — for $1.1 million March 7, 2011.

ATOMIC AVENUE ANALYSIS

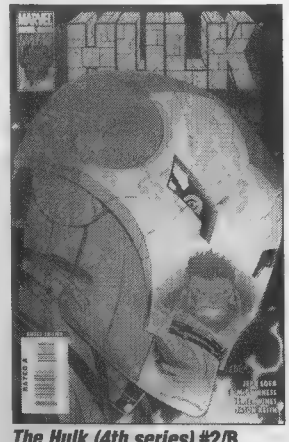
Carolyn Bickford,
ComicBase/Atomic Avenue

Prices have largely remained steady through November, though we're seeing interest in rare variants and classic Silver Age. *Hulk (4th series)* #2/B (Apr 08) variant with The Red Hulk cover jumped to $19 in recent sales, and the original *Justice League of America* #1 (Nov 60) went from $29,900 to $30,100 in NM.

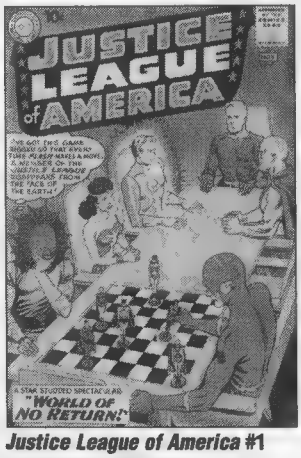
The new DC "52" issues are holding onto their price gains of last month, but collectors seem to be bucking earlier series restarts. *Justice Society of America (2nd series)* #1/A (Feb 07) dropped from $10 to $6.50, and *Wonder Woman (3rd series)* #1/A (Aug 06) lost a third of its value.

Even a Silver Age classic is softening, with recent sales dropping *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #1 (1964) down to $1,925 in NM value.

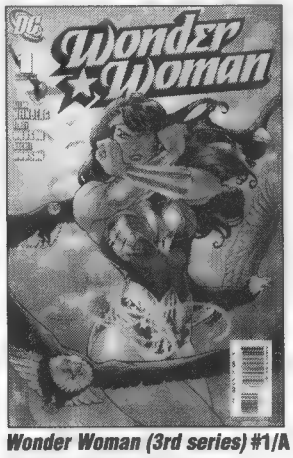
*— **Carolyn Bickford** is the administrator for **Atomic Avenue (www.atomicavenue.com)**, where you can find the comics you're looking for. She lives in San Jose, Calif., with her husband, **ComicBase** creator Peter Bickford; her two lovely children; and a whole lot of comic books. **CBG** maintains a strategic alliance with ComicBase.*



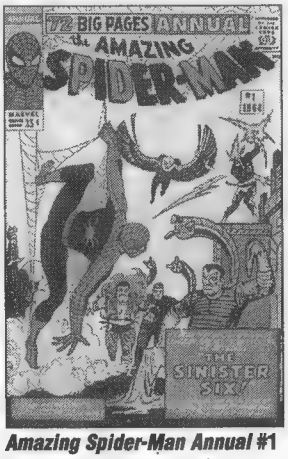
***The Hulk (4th series)* #2/B**
November's NM price: $2.99
December's NM price: $19



***Justice League of America* #1**
November's NM price: $29,900
December's NM price: $30,100



***Wonder Woman (3rd series)* #1/A**
November's NM price: $7.50
December's NM price: $5

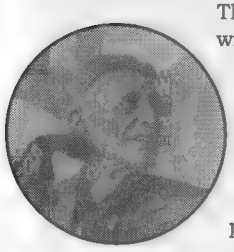


***Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #1**
November's NM price: $2,125
December's NM price: $1,925

What is CGC?

CGC is the abbreviation for Certified Guaranty Company, an independent grading firm that evaluates comics, gives them a condition grade based on strict criteria and a 10-point scale, and then encapsulates the comic book in a hard plastic holder with the grade prominently displayed. This independent grading levels the playing field for buyers and sellers by establishing a grade that both can agree on and trust. More information is available at *www.cgccomics.com.*

Jerry Robinson art results from Heritage



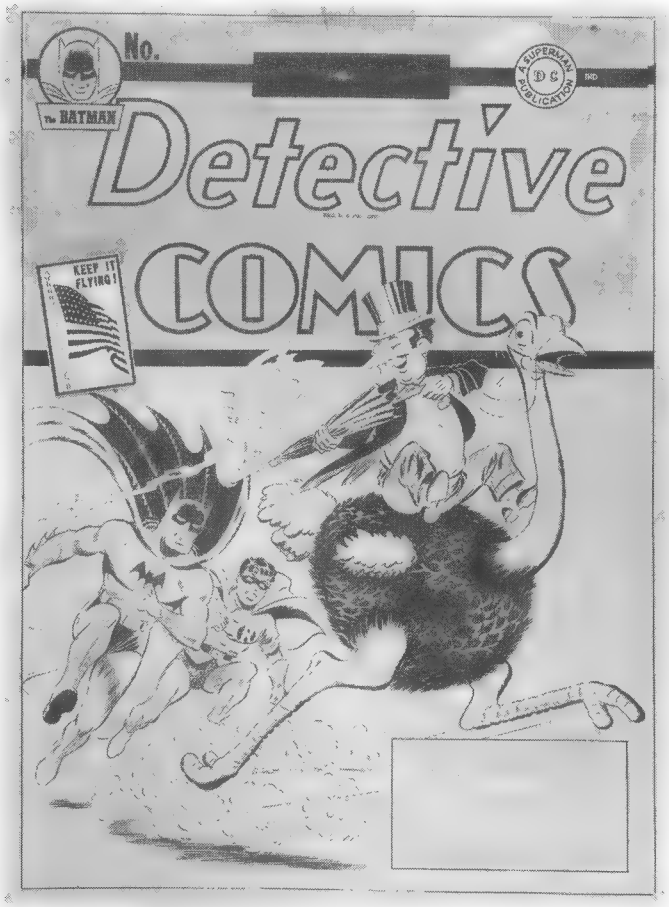
Three pieces of art from the collection of artist, writer, educator, and activist Jerry Robinson did well in Heritage Comic Auctions' November 15-17 Signature Sale in Beverly Hills, Calif.

The original art for the cover of *Detective Comics* #67 (Sep 42), led the way with a final bid of $239,000, coming up short of its pre-auction estimate of $300,000 or more.

Another piece from Robinson's collection also failed to meet its pre-auction estimates, but still sold well, when the cover of *Adventure Comics* #73 (Apr 42) by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby closed at $119,500 (pre-auction estimate $150,000).

The cover of *Action Comics* #46 (Mar 42) by Fred Ray exceeded its pre-auction estimate of $100,000, closing at $101,575.

Sadly, Robinson died Dec. 7, just weeks short of his 90th birthday. Fellow Golden Age creator Joe Simon died a week later, on Dec. 14, at the age of 98.

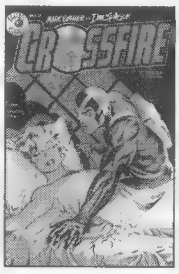


CBG TRENDWATCHER

Steve Mortensen,
Miracle Comics

The comics market reached another milestone in November with the sale of *Action Comics* #1 in CGC 9.0 for $2.16 million. Sometimes, I wonder why people seem so surprised by comics selling for that much. Coins, paintings, and other collectibles surpass the million-dollar mark all the time. It's about time comics got their due, as well. Such a landmark issue in probably the best condition in existence seems like a deal to me at $2 million (although too big for my budget). I think that in 10 years the owner will reap the rewards from the appreciation of that copy.

One of the themes of this issue is the top sexiest women in comics. One creator comes to mind for me: Dave Stevens. To me, Dave was the ultimate artist of the female figure. His covers are some of my favorites. A few that come to mind are: *Airboy* #5 (Eclipse), *Crossfire* #12 (Eclipse), *Twisted Tales* #1 (Eclipse), *DNAgents* #24 (Eclipse), *Jungle Comics* #1 (Blackthorne), and *Jonny Quest* #5 (Comico). Then, there's *The Rocketeer*, which was his masterpiece. I recently flipped through a copy of *The Rocketeer Artist Edition* by IDW. They took his original art and scanned it, then reproduced it at its original size. No color, just his pencils and inks. It's stunning. A copy will set you back $400, but it's well worth the price.



Here are this month's picks:

***Ultimate Fallout* #4 (Oct 11).** I picked up a dozen or so copies of this issue last month. It's the first appearance of Miles Morales, the new Spider-Man in Marvel's Ultimate Universe. I also bought some copies of *Ultimate Spider-Man* Vol. 2 #1. I think these are good issues to pick up at cover price. Both are difficult to grade in CGC 9.8 because of the polybag packaging. *Ultimate Fallout* #4 sells for about $100 in CGC 9.8, and *Ultimate Spider-Man* Vol. 2 #1 sells for about $50 in CGC 9.8.

***Conan the Barbarian* #1.** Conan has a new ongoing series that I'm excited about. Dark Horse will release it early next year. Marvel's original *Conan the Barbarian* #1 (Oct 70) has been doing well in the back-issue market. CGC 9.6s sell for about $1,200, and CGC 9.8s sell for about $4,000. Dark Horse relaunched *Conan* in 2004, but, sadly, #1 with its great Linsner cover has dropped to about $20 in CGC 9.8. I remember selling them for about $75 a few years ago. If Dark Horse had not stopped the series, the price would have probably held or even increased. The stopping and starting of series is bad for titles from a collector's perspective. Dark Horse stopped *Conan* and then started *Conan: Road of Kings* in 2010. *Road of Kings* has not done well from an investment point of view, and now that series will end. Nevertheless, I remain optimistic and will probably buy several copies of the new *Conan the Barbarian* series in hopes that Dark Horse lets the series run indefinitely, by Crom!

*— **Steve Mortensen** owns **Miracle Comics** (**www.miraclecomics.com**) and **Micurio.com**, a free online community for sharing all collectibles. He can be reached at **steve@stevemortensen.com**.*

CBG TRENDWATCHER

Michael Tierney, Collector's Edition

DC's ride on the wave from its "New 52" promotion flattened out fairly quickly for us. Once the advertising stopped, sales dropped like a rock. The store where DC once sold the best has seen steadily declining numbers, while Marvel is rebounding. And the store where DC had sold the least now sells the best — just not enough to offset the other.

Characters and titles that were featured in the ads are still doing well, with *Justice League* firmly at the top, but the rest of the line has fallen to pre-*Flashpoint* numbers or below. New customers do still come in, but now often find other items of interest.

The bottom line is that advertising works better than relying on free news coverage of gimmicks.

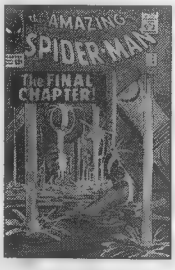
Without doing anything spectacular, Marvel climbed back into a tie for the new-comics-sales lead with DC. But the launch of *Avenging Spider-Man*, featuring a free digital code in each poly-bagged copy of #1, fell flat.

Overall, November sales were only slightly better than those for October, which was a disappointment. I'd started my Thanksgiving sales on Monday, just to get the jump on all the big chain stores and their events. Early sales were strong, and Wednesday was huge — and then a local phenomenon made this Black Friday one of my worst ever.

You wouldn't think that college sports would affect comic-book sales. But, because Arkansas has no professional sports teams, the University of Arkansas Razorbacks basketball and football teams are revered with a near-religious stature. Whenever they make National Championship runs, my prayers are for night games, which didn't happen this year. Once kickoff happened, the stores emptied. This was the only Black Friday I've ever had where the following Saturday was better. But even *that* was a down day, because the Hogs lost, and nearly everyone through the doors was mildly depressed.

The big story in November was back issues. While I didn't move any *big* items, activity was brisk from readers. And demand for cheap all-ages comics helped push back-issue sales over 33% above recent November averages.

Key Sales (all unslabbed):

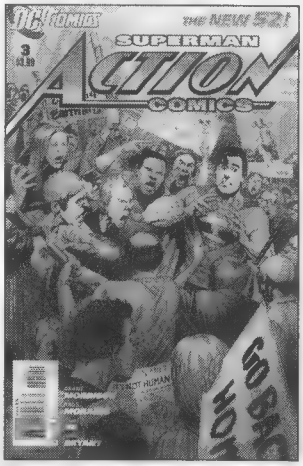


Amazing Spider-Man #33 FR $12
Batman #174 VG+ $27.50
Green Lantern/Green Arrow #76 (Neal Adams art begins) GD- $18.50
Dell Four Color #606 (Sir Lancelot) FN- $18.75
Dell Giant #2 (Silly Symphonies) FN+ $55
Superman #277 VF- $12
Tales of Suspense #59 (Captain America begins) GD $30
Uncanny X-Men #117 VF- $26.25
Wolverine (Vol. 1) #4 NM $30
Wolverine (Vol. 2) #1 NM $27.50

— ***Michael Tierney*** *runs* ***Collector's Edition*** *in North Little Rock and* ***The Comic Book Store*** *in Little Rock, Ark. He can be reached at* ***cbsrock@swbell.net*** *or* ***(501) 791-4222.***

CBG TRENDWATCHER

John Tinkess, Another Dimension



Our sales hit a record high again in November, and, now that we're through three months of the new DC Universe, most titles are beginning to settle into a regular sales pattern. Most of the top titles (*Justice League, Batman, Detective,* and *Action*) are selling well above their pre-relaunch levels, and several more that are usually mid-range sellers (*Batgirl, Wonder Woman, Aquaman,* and *Nightwing*) have become steady top-sellers. *All-Star Western* has more than doubled its previous sales as *Jonah Hex*. *Animal Man* and *Swamp Thing* were the surprise hits of the new 52, and neither has had noticeable drop-off from their first-issue sales. Marvel also had a strong month with *Point One* leading the way (although we did sell them for half price, thanks to Marvel's free overships), and *Avenging Spider-Man* made its debut slightly ahead of *Amazing Spider-Man* in sales, while the "X-Men Regenesis" relaunch has sparked renewed interest in the core X-titles.

The one downside of DC's relaunch is that the bottom end of the line is dropping quickly. When the relaunch began in September, a surprising number of people decided to sample the entire line, but readers are quickly narrowing their lists down to their new favorites. Sales of such titles as *Hawk & Dove, Men of War, OMAC, Static Shock, Grifter, Mister Terrific, Blue Beetle, Blackhawks,* and *Voodoo* are quickly bottoming out.

Back on the plus side, Vertigo has a hit with *Spaceman*. By the *100 Bullets* creative team of Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso, this new science-fiction series got off to a great start with a special $1 first issue, and sales have remained strong on the second issue, as well.

Top Comics for November

Justice League #3
Batman #3
Detective Comics #3
Action Comics #3
Point One #1
Green Lantern #3
Batman and Robin #3
Batman: The Dark Knight #3
Avenging Spider-Man #1
Amazing Spider-Man #673
Batgirl #3
Flash #3
Fear Itself #7.1
Wonder Woman #3
Aquaman #3
Uncanny X-Men #1
Nightwing #3
Batwoman #3
Fear Itself #7.2
Red Lanterns #3
Green Lantern Corps #3
Animal Man #3
Superman #3
New Avengers #18
Wolverine and The X-Men #2
Avengers #19
Swamp Thing #3
Ultimate Comics Spider-Man #4
Fantastic Four #600
Justice League International #3

— ***John Tinkess*** *runs* ***Another Dimension*** *in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. He can be reached at* ***comics@another-dimension.com*** *or* ***(403) 283-7078.***

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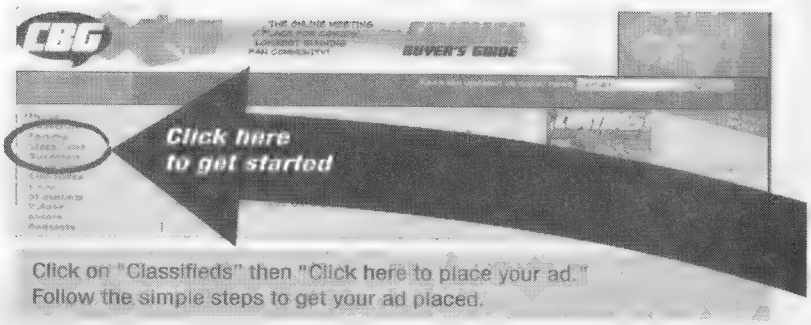

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ADVERTISERS' INDEX

A

Arcade Comics Entertainment.....41

B

Bags Unlimited .. 3, 59

C

CGC.....5

Collection Drawer Co.....57

Comic Heaven.....41

Comic-Con Int'l.....2

Comic Buyer's Guide..... 45, 46

Cornell & Finklemeier 57

F

Frank & Son Comic/ Card.....46

H

Heritage Galleries & Auction.....60

K

KP Adv Promo.....45

M

Motor City Comic Con.....47

N

Neat Stuff Collectibles 23

W

Write Brothers, Inc. 27

Comic Shop Directory.....35

Web Directory.....15

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To have your event included, fax your listing to Lisa Dombrowski at ***CBG* Con Calendar,** (715) 445-4087. The e-mail is *showscalendar@krause.com.*

CALIFORNIA

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May 19-20 CA, San Jose. Big Wow! ComicFest. Convention Center, 150 W. San Carlos St. SH: Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. A: $15-$25. www.bigwowcomicfest.com

Jul 11-15 CA, San Diego. Comic-Con International. Convention Center, 111 W. Harbor Dr. Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA, 92112. PH: 619-491-2475.

COLORADO

Jun 15-17 CO, Denver. Comic Con. Convention Center, 700 14th St. SH: Fri. 6pm-10pm, Sat.-Sun. 10am-6pm. A: $10-$45. T: 100. F: $300. Keith Royle. keith@comicbookclassroom.org

FLORIDA

Feb 17-19 FL, Orlando. MegaCon. Orange County Convention Center-Hall D, 9800 International Dr. A: $25-$60. MegaCon, 5757 74th Trace, Live Oak, FL, 32060. PH: 386-364-1826.

Convention listings are free! Have you sent in yours?

ILLINOIS

Feb 19 IL, Springfield. ComicCon. Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center, 625 E. Saint Joseph St. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

Mar 4 IL, Orland Park. Dan Con 2012. Orland Park Civic Center, 14750 South Ravinia Avenue. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $2. www.danconcomiccon.com

Mar 11 IL, Champaign-Urbana. Twin Cities ComicCon. Eastland Suites Urbana, 1907 N. Cunningham Ave. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

May 20 IL, Springfield. ComicCon. Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center, 625 E. Saint Joseph St. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

Aug 9-12 IL, Rosemont. Chicago Comic Con. Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, 5555 N. River Rd. SH: Thurs. 5pm-9pm, Fri. 12noon-8pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Wizard World Conventions, Courney McVicker, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018. PH: 646-380-2477.

INDIANA

Feb 25 IN, Fort Wayne. Comic Book Convention. Comfort Suites, 5775 Coventry Ln. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

Feb 26 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 6990 E. 21st St. SH: 9:30am-3:30pm. A: $4. T: 60. Andy Holzman. PH: 317-824-9602.

Apr 29 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 6990

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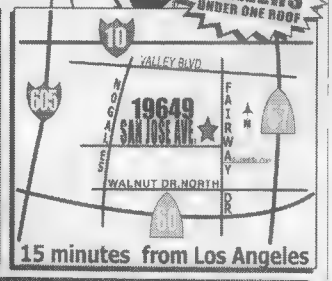

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E. 21st St. SH: 9:30am-3:30pm. A: $4. T: 60. Andy Holzman. PH: 317-824-9602.

Jun 10 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book Show. Ramada Inn, 6990 E. 21st St. SH: 9:30am-3:30pm. A: $4. T: 60. Andy Holzman. PH: 317-824-9602.

Apr 14-15 KS, Overland Park-Kansas City. Planet Comicon. Overland Park Int'l. Trade Center, 6800 W. 115th St. SH: Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. A: $5-$20. Planet Promotions, Christopher Jackson, PO Box 25095, Overland Park, KS, 66225. PH: 913-345-1069.

Apr 21-22 MA, Boston. Boston Comic Con. Hynes Convention Center, 900 Boylston St. jim@bostoncomiccon.comwww.bostoncomiccon.com

Feb 19 MI, Livonia. X-trava Con. Knights of Columbus Hall, 19801 Farmington Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman, 33228 W. 12 Mile Rd., PMB #286, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334. PH: 248-426-8059.

Mar 25 MI, Livonia. X-trava Con. Knights of Columbus Hall, 19801 Farmington Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman, 33228 W. 12 Mile Rd., PMB #286, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334. PH: 248-426-8059.

Apr 22 MI, Livonia. X-trava Con. Knights of Columbus Hall, 19801 Farmington Rd. SH: 10am-4pm. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman, 33228 W. 12 Mile Rd., PMB #286, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334. PH: 248-426-8059.

May 18-20 MI, Novi. Motor City Comic Con. Rock Financial Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave. SH: Fri. 12noon-7pm, Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman, 33228 W. 12 Mile Rd., PMB #286, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334. PH: 248-426-8059.

Mar 4 MN, Mounds View. Twin Cities ComiCon. Mermaid Entertainment Center, 2200 Hwy. 10. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

May 19-20 NY, New York. Big Apple Comic Con. Penn Plaza Pavilion, 401 Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. Wizard World Conventions, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018.

Apr 29 NC, Raleigh. Comic Book Show. Holiday Inn Crabtree, 4100 Glenwood Ave. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Lyn Anderson, PO Box 99201, Raleigh, NC, 27624. PH: 919-844-1758.

Jun 22-24 NC, Charlotte. HeroesCon. Convention Center, 501 S. College St. A: $15-$30. Heroes Aren't Hard to Find, Shelton Drum, 1957 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC, 28204. PH: 704-375-7462.

Apr 21-22 OH, Columbus. Small Press & Alternative Comics Expo (SPACE). Ramada Plaza Hotel & Conference Center, 4900 Sinclair Rd. SH: Sat. 10am-6pm. A: $5.-$8. www.backporchcomics.com

Mar 18 PA, Essington-Philadelphia. Comic Con. Ramada Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. F: $70. Derek Woywood. PH: 856-217-5737 or dwoywood@yahoo.com.

Apr 20-22 PA, Monroeville. Pittsburgh Comicon. Convention Center, 209 Mall Blvd. Comics World, 1002 Graham Ave., Windber, PA, 15963. PH: 814-467-4116 or pcomicon@floodcity.net.

Apr 29 PA, Essington-Philadelphia. Comic Con. Ramada Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $3. F: $70. Derek Woywood. PH: 856-217-5737 or dwoywood@yahoo.com.

Jun 1-3 PA, Philadelphia. Comic Con. Pennsylvania Convention Center, 1101 Arch St. SH: Fri. 12noon-8pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Wizard World Conventions, Courney McVicker, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018. PH: 646-380-2477.

Jun 22-24 TX, San Antonio. Texas Comicon. Event Center, 8111 Meadow Leaf Dr. www.texascomicon.com

Mar 31 VA, Salem. Roanoke Valley Comicon. Civic Center, 1001 Roanoke Blvd. SH: 10am-4pm. A: $5, 10 & under free. Untamed Worlds. PH: 434-237-7115.

Mar 3 WI, Madison. ComicCon. Howard Johnson Plaza, 3841 E. Washington. SH: 10am-4pm. A: Free. Alan. PH: 309-657-1599.

Mar 17 WI, Plover. EgoCon. Elizabeth Inn. SH: 9:30am-11pm. egocon.masona@gmail.com-www.facebook.egoconevent

Mar 24-25 Canada, ON, Toronto. Comic Con. Direct Energy Centre, 100 Princess Blvd. SH: Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 11am-6pm. Wizard World Conventions, Courney McVicker, 1010 Avenue of the Americas, 3rd Floor, New York, NY, 10018. PH: 646-380-2477.

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PARENTS DAY BECOMES COMICS DAY

Tony Escobar

I had the great honor and pleasure of speaking to a group of first through third graders about my love of comic books at my childrens' school yesterday! My daughters attend Annie Wright School in Tacoma, Wash.

The school offers a brown-bag lunch lecture series with parents speaking about their professions, hobbies, *etc.* When I was approached, I thought I would be asked to talk about my career! (I am a pediatric general and thoracic surgeon.)

I was so excited! I partnered with my wonderful local comics shop, Atomic Comics — and the owner, Shane Ziemer, generously donated overstock from Free Comic Book Day!

I was able to hand out four age-appropriate comics to each of the 35 children that attended! And there were enough left over to give to the kids that couldn't make it!

Shane and I also went in together and donated the entire *Bone* series to the Annie Wright library. The kids love *Bone*, and they were so excited to have the complete collection! (The library had only had three volumes.)

The talk was incredible. The kids were engaged and interactive. My oldest daughter helped me put together a PowerPoint presentation that helped provide a snippet on how much I love the world of comics.

I tried to expose kids to all kinds of publishers: DC, Marvel, Archie, Cartoon Books, Top Shelf, Dark Horse, *etc.* So many kids knew *Tintin* and *Asterix*, too! Lots of kids had seen the recent slate of comics-related movies, and they were all excited about *The Avengers*! And, boy, do they love *Tiny Titans*!

All in all, it was an incredible experience. My daughters were so proud to have me there. The kids loved the Green Lantern shirt I wore.

I wanted to share my experience to encourage others to get out in their community, in their kids' schools, and talk about comics. The teachers were incredibly supportive, and the kids were thrilled to go visit a comics shop! They were all excited about Free Comic Book Day and our local big convention (Emerald City Comic Con).

Brent: *What a great story, Tony!*

Let me second your encouragement to be interactive with your local school, library, and other community outreach groups. While the younger students are a natural audience, speaking to other groups can also be beneficial.

There are plenty of folks who don't know that comics are still being published and are amazed at the variety of offerings available, many of which they can then share with their friends as well as their children and grandchildren.

FOR ART'S SAKE

by Chris Smigliano

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN A DIGITAL COMICS SUBSCRIPTION, MR. G?
...SIGH... IT'S JUST GETTING WAY TOO MUCH FOR ME!!
I MISS THOSE TIMES WHEN WE USED TO GET OUR COMICS AT THE OLD MOM-AND-POP STORES..
THIS HIGH-TECHNOLOGY STUFF JUST ISN'T THE SAME...
HOLD ON.. THERE'S A SPECIAL APP FOR THAT!!
©2012
HEY! THIS ISN'T A LIBRARY!!
DON'T SEE ANYTHING YOU WANT? GET OUT!
AH! MUCH BETTER!!
STOREKEEPER
THERE'S ALSO A SPECIAL MPG FILE THAT MAKES THE SOUND OF A SPINNER RACK!!

ONLINE BONUS! Don't want to wait to share your opinion?
Log in now at *CBGXtra.com*, visit the *Oh, So?* area, and post away!

MORE 100s?

Patrick M. Premo
1250 Chipmonk Rd.
Allegany, NY 14706

I recently obtained a copy of ***Comics Buyer's Guide Presents: 100 Baddest Motherf*#lers in Comics*** and I must say that I am enjoying it as much as I did your ***100 Sexiest Women in Comics***.

I hope more of these types of volumes are in the works; in fact, I would suggest ***100 Fantabulous Animated/Cartoon Characters in Comics***.

You and your staff are to be commended for doing an outstanding job, not only in selecting the 100 baddest, but also in choosing the eye-appealing full-color illustrations. Although I might not agree with the ranking of the 100, I think all of the 100 you selected deserve to be included. I was especially pleased to see my favorite muck-monsters on your list: Swamp Thing, The Heap, and

Man-Thing. Of course, there are some bad-ass tough guys and gals that, in my opinion, need to be included, should you do a second edition. You listed The Hulk but no She-Hulk. There was Black Adam and Ibac but no Captain Marvel (Shazam!); Darkness but no Witchblade; Sub-Mariner but no Aquaman; *etc.*

I would like to suggest the following additions for your second edition. (I would also argue that my #1 pick below should be near, if not at, the *top* of your list.)

1. Conan the Barbarian
2. Tarzan of the Apes
3. Mr. Monster
4. Doc Savage
5. Vampirella
6. Red Sonja
7. Superman
8. Captain Marvel (Shazam!)
9. The Phantom
10. The Predator
11. Dracula
12. Lara Croft, Tomb Raider
13. Godzilla
14. Kull the Conqueror
15. The Terminator
16. The Alien
17. Darth Vader
18. Zombies (*Night of the Living Dead, The Walking Dead, etc.*)
19. Ka-zar
20. Shanna, the She Devil
21. Magnus, Robot Fighter
22. Robocop
23. Jason Voorhees
24. Witchblade
25. Sheena, Queen of the Jungle
26. She-Hulk
27. Wonder Woman
28. Plastic Man
29. Korak, Son of Tarzan
30. Beast
31. Electra
32. Bizarro
33. Two-Face
34. J'onn J'onzz
35. Fin Fang Foom
36. Aquaman
37. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Brent: *There are excellent choices for consideration here, Patrick, and we're glad to hear you're enjoying our two one-shots. (Each is available for $8.99 at* ***www.KrauseBooks.com*** *in the Comics and Entertainment category. Check out our preview on Pages 8 and 9 this month for more.)*

As to our criteria for the choices in ***100 Baddest Motherf*#lers****: They had to be male, they had to be human (or humanoid), they had to get their start in comic books, and they had to have some darkness in their soul. That latter criterion is what kept such super-strong characters as Superman and Captain Marvel off the list.*

Last Kiss®

Many fans blame the Comics Code Authority for ruining superhero comics. But Code censorship (starting in late 1954) also made romance comics a lot less...interesting!

Art by Charles Nicholas & Sal Trapani
Color by Allen Freeman
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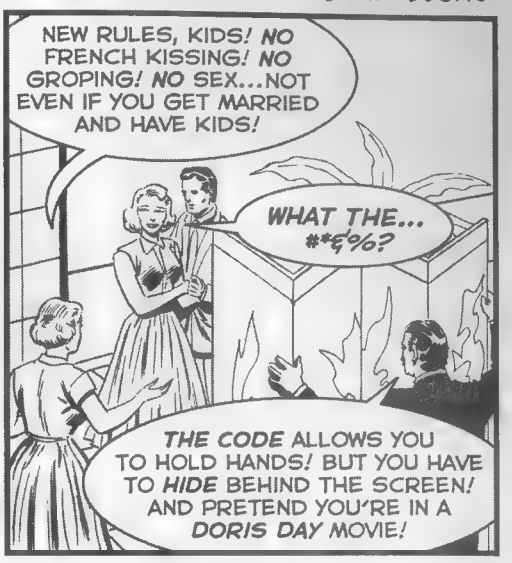
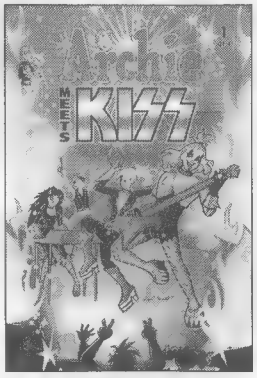
LASTKISSINC.COM JOHN LUSTIG

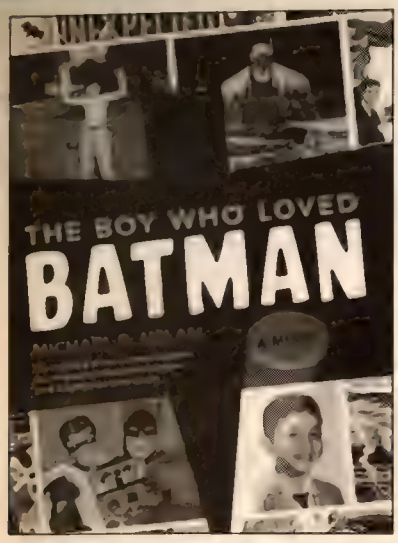

NEW RULES, KIDS! NO FRENCH KISSING! NO GROPING! NO SEX...NOT EVEN IF YOU GET MARRIED AND HAVE KIDS!
WHAT THE... #*$%?
THE CODE ALLOWS YOU TO HOLD HANDS! BUT YOU HAVE TO HIDE BEHIND THE SCREEN! AND PRETEND YOU'RE IN A DORIS DAY MOVIE!

FROM ARCHIE TO USLAN

Paul Dale Roberts



I remember when Archie embraced the multiverse with his meeting with The Punisher? Now, he embraces it even more with his meeting with Kiss. Who would have ever thought? I think this is going to be a fun story and I can't wait to read it! Thanks for the heads up!



On another note, it is so true: Michael Uslan really *does* love Batman. He showed his passion when he helped place The Dark Knight on the silver screen. When you have a strong passion like Uslan's, you will be successful in getting out a fantastic story.

The Batman legend is even stronger, with the comic books, cartoons, and, of course, the movies.

Maggie also made a good point with her review of Uslan's book. He *does* set a movie out with a beginning, middle, and end — and a *point*! The *point* makes the whole movie!

IT JUST HAPPENS

Richard M. Brown
2326 Cabot
Detroit, MI 48209

So, Batman "just happens" to carry Bat-Shark Repellant in his utility belt? I would think sharing the formula with surfers would help lifeguards everywhere.

How does that awesome hero, Chlorophyll Kid, "just happen" to carry super-catnip around to confound Streaky the Super-Cat?

The most unusual example came when Rick Jones was saved by his parachute. He explained that he carried his parachute around just in case he experienced a crash of a Skrull spaceship.

Things "just happen" to our heroes so often that even a vacation turns deadly in the case of The Fantastic Four.

FLASHBACKS

125 yrs Feb 27, 1887 **Edgar Henry Banger** is born. The British comic-book artist's work includes ***Enoch Hard***, ***Tubby and Trot***, ***Jolliboy Farm***, ***Koko the Pup***, and ***Kiddyfun***.

125 yrs Feb 19, 1887 Cartoonist, screenwriter, director and producer of Terrytoons **Paul Terry** is born.

105 yrs Feb 28, 1907 ***Terry and The Pirates***, ***Miss Lace***, and ***Steve Canyon*** writer-artist **Milton Caniff** is born.

100 yrs Feb 2, 1912 Golden Age artist **Creig Flessel** is born.

100 yrs Feb 11, 1912 Mexican writer-artist of ***Los Supersabios*** **German Butze** is born.

100 yrs Feb 14, 1912 Political cartoonist **Oliver Harrington** is born. He writes and draws ***Dark Laughter***, called "the first black comic strip to receive national recognition."

95 yrs Feb 12, 1917 ***The Gumps*** begins, created by **Sidney Smith**.

95 yrs Feb 27, 1917 Golden Age artist **Reed Crandall** is born. He is especially noted for his work for Quality Comics (through the Eisner-Iger shop), the E.C. line, Warren comics, and Tower Comics.

95 yrs Feb 28, 1917 The Japanese creator of ***Puu-san*** ("Mr. Poo"), **Taizo Yokoyama** is born. He publishes "Taizo Manga."

85 yrs Feb 5, 1927 Swedish artist **Lennart Elworth** is born, creator of ***47:an Lökon*** and ***Thudor***.

75 yrs Feb 1937 The first Western comics, ***Western Picture Stories*** and ***Star Ranger***, begin.

70 yrs Feb 1942 ***Gene Autry Comics* #1** begins the series from Fawcett.

70 yrs Feb 1942 **Leslie Charteris**' character **The Saint** is introduced to comics format in ***Silver Streak Comics* #18**.

65 yrs Feb 25, 1947 Journalist and pioneering comics fan **Gary Brown** is born, creator of the longtime CAPA-alpha zine ***Ibid***.

65 yrs Feb 1947 ***Funny Stuff*** introduces **Dodo and The Frog** in **#18**.

60 yrs Feb 1, 1952 The comic strip ***Beyond Mars*** begins, created and written by **Jack Williamson** and drawn by **Lee Elias**.

60 yrs Feb 20, 1952 Writer and colorist **Anthony Tollin** is born. He edits the ongoing ***Shadow*** and ***Doc Savage*** line of magazines.

60 yrs Feb 24, 1952 Writer-artist **Bryan Talbot** is born. He creates ***The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*** and ***The Tale of One Bad Rat***.

55 yrs Feb 1, 1957 ***Love and Rockets*** writer-artist **Gilberto Hernandez** is born. He is especially known for ***Palomar*** and ***Luba*** features.

55 yrs Feb 12, 1957 Writer-artist **Ken Meyer Jr.** is born.

55 yrs Feb 19, 1957 The comic strip ***On Stage*** begins, written and drawn by **Leonard Starr**.

55 yrs Feb 23, 1957 Writer-artist **Eric Lurio** is born.

50 yrs Feb 4, 1962 Writer **Tom Sniegoski** is born. His scripts range from those for **Vampirella** to those for **Bone** characters.

50 yrs Feb 9, 1962 Writer-editor **Sarah E. Byam** is born.

50 yrs Feb 11, 1962 "Furry" artist **Shon Howell** is born.

50 yrs Feb 13, 1962 Writer-artist **Stan Shaw** is born.

50 yrs Feb 13, 1962 Artist **John A. Peck** is born.

50 yrs Feb 27, 1962 Artist **Andy Kubert** is born. He is especially noted for his work on **X-Men** and **Batman** projects.

50 yrs Feb 1962 Superman finally reveals the existence of **Supergirl** to the world in ***Action Comics* #285**.

50 yrs Feb 1962 ***Adventure Comics* #293** introduces **Bizarro Lex Luthor** and **The Legion of Super Pets** and tells the origin of **Mon-El**.

45 yrs Feb 16, 1967 Artist **Timothy Bradstreet** is born.

45 yrs Feb 21, 1967 Writer-artist **Brian Douglas Ahern** (aka **"Briz"**) is born.

45 yrs Feb 1967 ***Justice League of America* #51** reunites **Zatanna** and **Zatara** in "Z — as in Zatanna — and Zero Hour" by **Gardner Fox**, **Mike Sekowsky**, and **Sid Greene**.

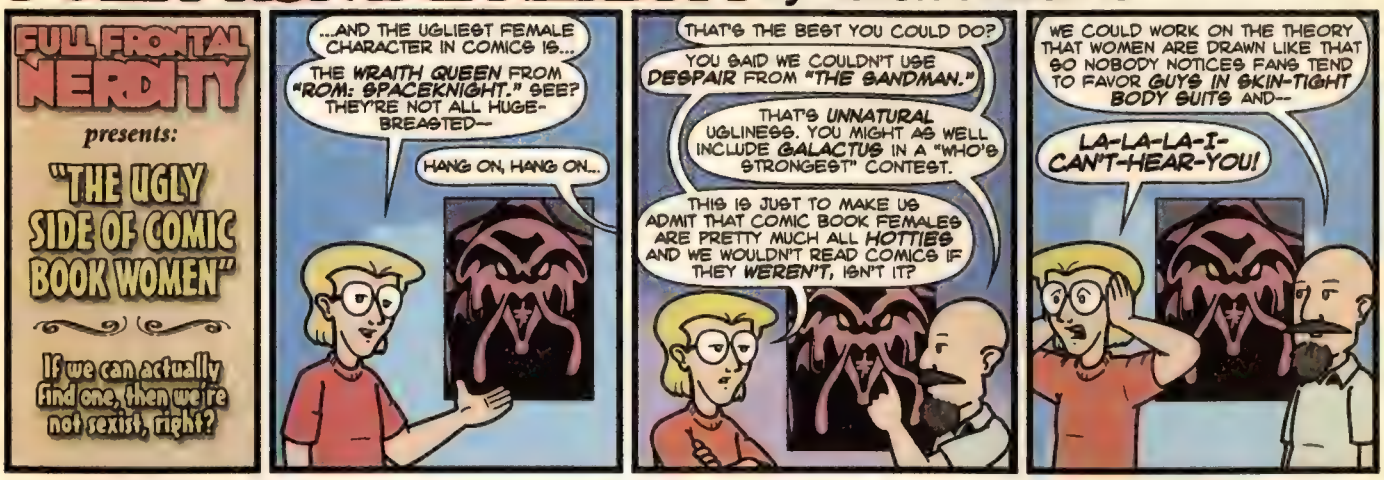
45 yrs Feb 1967 Gold Key introduces ***The Green Hornet*** in **#1**, featuring a cover photo of **Van Williams** and **Bruce Lee**.

45 yrs Feb 1967 Western star **Ghost Rider** gets his own series with ***Ghost Rider* #1**.

40 yrs Feb 5, 1972 **Doug Alexander Gregory** is born. The comics and card artist is also storyboard artist for the film ***The Losers***.

40 yrs Feb 1972 ***Marvel Spotlight* #1** introduces **Werewolf by Night** by **Roy and Jeannie Thomas**, **Gerry Conway**, and **Mike Ploog**.

FULL FRONTAL NERDITY by Aaron Williams


FULL FRONTAL NERDITY
presents:
"THE UGLY SIDE OF COMIC BOOK WOMEN"
If we can actually find one, then we're not sexist, right?
...AND THE UGLIEST FEMALE CHARACTER IN COMICS IS...
THE WRAITH QUEEN FROM "ROM: SPACEKNIGHT." SEE? THEY'RE NOT ALL HUGE-BREASTED--
HANG ON, HANG ON...
THAT'S THE BEST YOU COULD DO?
YOU SAID WE COULDN'T USE DESPAIR FROM "THE SANDMAN."
THAT'S UNNATURAL UGLINESS. YOU MIGHT AS WELL INCLUDE GALACTUS IN A "WHO'S STRONGEST" CONTEST.
THIS IS JUST TO MAKE US ADMIT THAT COMIC BOOK FEMALES ARE PRETTY MUCH ALL HOTTIES AND WE WOULDN'T READ COMICS IF THEY WEREN'T, ISN'T IT?
WE COULD WORK ON THE THEORY THAT WOMEN ARE DRAWN LIKE THAT SO NOBODY NOTICES FANS TEND TO FAVOR GUYS IN SKIN-TIGHT BODY SUITS AND--
LA-LA-LA-I-CAN'T-HEAR-YOU!

FLASHBACKS

40 yrs Feb 1972 ***All Star Western* #10** introduces **Jonah Hex**.

35 yrs Feb 1, 1977 Writer **Edmond Hamilton** dies of complications of kidney surgery at age 72. The science-fiction pro wrote many stories for DC, especially tales of the world of **Superman**.

35 yrs Feb 1977 The last comics published by **National Periodical Publications Inc.** carry this publication date. Beginning with March 1977 titles, comics are published by the newly named **DC Comics Inc.**

35 yrs Feb 1977 ***Marvel Spotlight* #32** introduces **Spider-Woman**.

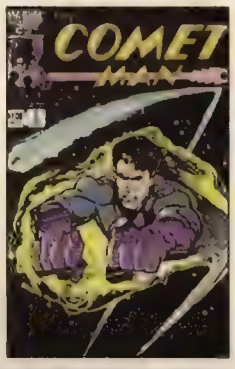
30 yrs Feb 13, 1982 Cartoonist **Gluyas Williams** dies at age 93.

30 yrs Feb 1982 ***Destroyer Duck* #1** introduces **Steve Gerber**'s **Destroyer Duck** and **Sergio Aragonés**' **Groo the Wanderer**.

30 yrs Feb 1982 Pacific Comics publishes ***Starslayer* #1**, a creator-owned bimonthly by **Mike Grell**. It introduces **Starslayer** — *and* **Dave Stevens**' **Rocketeer**.

25 yrs Feb 20, 1987 **Superman** artist **Wayne Boring** dies of a heart attack at age 81.

25 yrs Feb 17, 1987 ***Smokey Stover*** creator **Bill Holman** dies at the age of 83.



25 yrs Feb 1987 Marvel begins ***The Comet Man***, created and written by **Bill Mumy** and **Miguel Ferrer** and drawn by **Kelley Jones** and **Gerry Talaoc**.

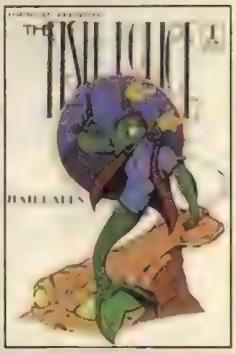
25 yrs Feb 1987 DC releases the first installment of the four-part "Batman: Year One" in ***Batman* #404** by **Frank Miller** and **David Mazzucchelli**. The story also introduces the modern **Selina Kyle** as **Catwoman**.

20 yrs Feb 4, 1992 Though many knew him best as a radio and TV actor (Paladin on radio's *Have Gun Will Travel*, Doris Day's boss on TV's *The Doris Day Show*), **John Dehner** started his career as a Disney animator. He dies this day of emphysema and diabetes at age 76.

20 yrs Feb 4, 1992 Disney animator and sequence director **Jack Kinney** dies at age 82. He won an Oscar for **"Der Fuehrer's Face"** and was head of Jack Kinney Productions.

20 yrs Feb 10, 1992 **"Captain George" Henderson** of ***Penny Dreadful*** and other publications, a comics dealer on Toronto's Markham Street, dies at age 62.

20 yrs Feb 17, 1992 In **Jerry Scott**'s ***Nancy*** strip, **George Bush** visits her school starting a two-week series in which Scott uses a real person as a strip character for the first time.



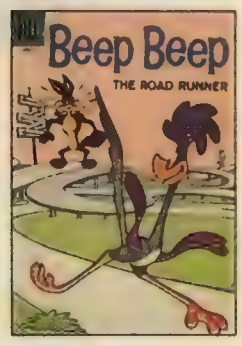
20 yrs Feb 28, 1992 The CBS TV ***Fish Police*** series begins from Hanna Barbera.

20 yrs Feb 1992 ***Action Comics* #674** reintroduces **Supergirl**.

20 yrs Feb 1992 ***X•O Manowar* #1** introduces, yes, **X•O Manowar**.

15 yrs Feb 15, 1997 Artist **Jack Sparling** dies at age 80. He drew ***Hap Hopper***, ***Claire Voyant***, and many other comics — including his co-creation with **Jerry Siegel** of ***Tiger Girl***.

10 yrs Feb 22, 2002 Award-winning animator, artist, writer, producer, and director **Chuck Jones** dies of heart failure at age 89. He is especially known for the quality of his **Road Runner** and **Bugs Bunny** cartoons — as well as the TV version of **Dr. Seuss**' ***How the Grinch Stole Christmas***.



5 yrs Feb 18, 2007 Artist **Bob Oksner** dies at age 90.

TONY'S BACK PAGE

Tony Isabella

Iron Man

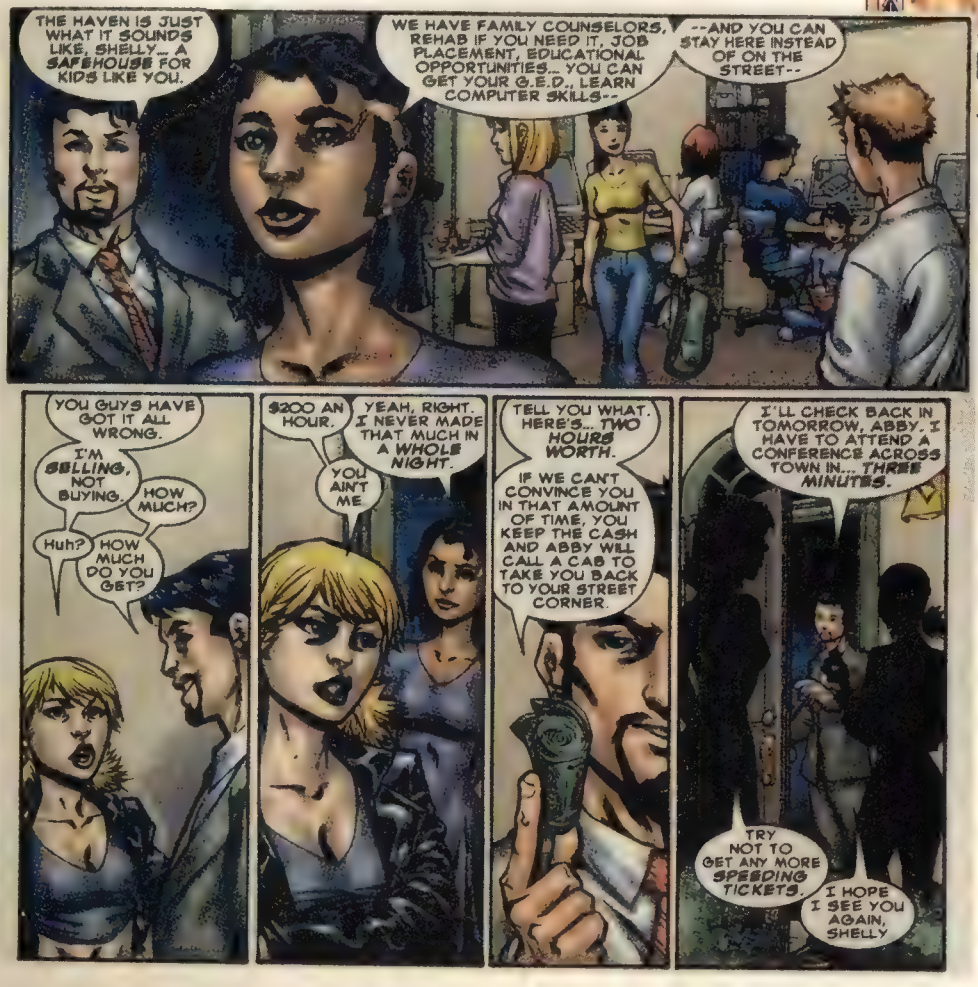
Of all the old comics I've written about in this featurette, *Iron Man* #51-52 (Marvel, April and May, 2002) are the most recent. Slowly, surely, I have been trying to catch up on my reading of key Marvel titles. Currently, I'm reading *Iron Man* from when Kurt Busiek and Sean Chen relaunched the Golden Avenger in late 1997.

Sometimes written with Roger Stern, Busiek and company produced a solid super-hero title. It was entertaining, but not exceptional. Busiek was followed by, first, Joe Quesada, and then, Frank Tieri. To put it as kindly as possible, those runs were pretty awful.

Then came a most unlikely choice to write Iron Man. Mike Grell had made his writing bones on *Warlord* and *Green Arrow* at DC, and on *Jon Sable Freelance* at First Comics. He not only brought a strong real-world atmosphere to *Iron Man*, but he also brought genuine humanity to Tony Stark and his supporting cast.

The two-issue "Jane Doe" story moved me. Iron Man and Tony Stark do things more commonly associated with Batman and Bruce Wayne in these issues, which revolve around The Haven, a safe house for kids living on the street. Stark not only funds the place, he's shown rescuing kids and bringing them to The Haven, as well as involving himself in helping them build new lives.

The story ranges from the streets to high society and the intrigues of politics. Artists Michael Ryan and Sean Parsons did an amazing job depicting all


THE HAVEN IS JUST WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE, SHELLY... A SAFEHOUSE FOR KIDS LIKE YOU.
WE HAVE FAMILY COUNSELORS, REHAB IF YOU NEED IT, JOB PLACEMENT, EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES... YOU CAN GET YOUR G.E.D., LEARN COMPUTER SKILLS--
--AND YOU CAN STAY HERE INSTEAD OF ON THE STREET--
YOU GUYS HAVE GOT IT ALL WRONG.
I'M SELLING, NOT BUYING.
HOW MUCH?
Huh?
HOW MUCH DO YOU GET?
$200 AN HOUR.
YEAH, RIGHT. I NEVER MADE THAT MUCH IN A WHOLE NIGHT.
YOU AIN'T ME
TELL YOU WHAT. HERE'S... TWO HOURS WORTH.
IF WE CAN'T CONVINCE YOU IN THAT AMOUNT OF TIME, YOU KEEP THE CASH AND ABBY WILL CALL A CAB TO TAKE YOU BACK TO YOUR STREET CORNER.
I'LL CHECK BACK IN TOMORROW, ABBY. I HAVE TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE ACROSS TOWN IN... THREE MINUTES.
TRY NOT TO GET ANY MORE SPEEDING TICKETS.
I HOPE I SEE YOU AGAIN, SHELLY

the real-world elements and the super-hero stuff. Grell's characters rang very true to me through these two issues, even to the shocking end pages.

Iron Man #51-52 were more or less the start of a terrific series of comic books that ran about a year-and-a-half. Grell presented his readers with a variety of different types of stories. He put Tony and his friends through some emotional, heart-wrenching, and above all, believable situations. To find a previous Iron Man I liked as much, I'd have to go back to the David Michelinie and Bob Layton issues of the 1970s and 1980s and the Archie Goodwin issues of the 1960s.

Unfortunately, the Grell issues have never been collected in either trade paperback or hardcover. That's a shame. I'd buy such books in a heartbeat.

TOP 10 FAVORITE COMIC BOOK COVERS

CHOSEN BY BRENT FRANKENHOFF

Romantic Encounters

It sometimes seems as if romance has been a part of every comics character's career.

While some eschew it ("Girls! Phooey!"), others embrace it. Many more struggle with it. (See Archie Andrews.)

Digging through decades of comics covers, we've come across a variety of approaches to the theme of relationship. And, obviously, there are countless covers more than these.

Have specific covers of romantic encounters stuck in your memory? Share them with us and our readers by writing to us at ***Comics Buyer's Guide***, 700 E. State St., at ***ohso@krause.com***, or on ***CBGXtra.com***. We'd *love* to hear from you.

Little Lulu #44 © 1952 Marge Henderson Buell. Cover art John Stanley. Scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions.

***Little Lulu* #44 (Feb 52).** Consider the complexities of the relationship between Lulu and Tubby that John Stanley provided in this simple gag cover.

Orig. price: 10¢ Current NM price: $70

10¢
BAT MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Featuring "THE MARRIAGE of BATMAN and BATWOMAN!"
GOSH! WHAT'LL BECOME OF ME NOW?

Batman #122 © 1959 National Periodical Publications, Inc. Cover by Curt Swan and Stan Kaye. Scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions.

***Batman* #122 (Mar 59).** It must be the fear of sidekicks everywhere: What happens when their mentor acquires a new partner?

Orig. price: 10¢ Current NM price: $225

Herbie #6 © 1964 American Comics Group. Cover by Ogden Whitney. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Herbie* #6 (Jan 65).** While The Plump Lump may have had no interest in women, that doesn't mean *they* had no interest in *him*, from this cavegirl paramour to numerous celebrities.

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $88

"ONE BRIDEGROOM TOO MANY!"
The FLASH
IF ANY ONE CAN SHOW JUST CAUSE WHY BARRY ALLEN AND IRIS WEST SHOULD NOT BE WED, LET HIM NOW SPEAK OR FOREVER HOLD HIS PEACE!
STOP THE WEDDING! IRIS IS MARRYING THE WRONG MAN!

Flash #165 © 1966 National Periodical Publications, Inc. Cover by Murphy Anderson. Scan courtesy of Heritage Comic Auctions.

***Flash* #165 (Nov 66).** Barry "Flash" Allen gave new meaning to *My Fair Lady*'s "Get Me to the Church on Time!"

Orig. price: 12¢ Current NM price: $94

Incredible Hulk #140 © 1971 Marvel Comics Group. Cover by Herb Trimpe. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Incredible Hulk* #140 (Jun 71).** After searching for and finding a peaceful place and a love he could call his own, The Hulk had it all snatched away in the second half of this two-part tale plotted by Harlan Ellison.

Orig. price: 15¢ Current NM price: $36

Incredible Hulk #373 © 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Cover by Dale Keown and Bob McLeod. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Incredible Hulk* #373 (Sep 90).** Bruce Banner's longtime love (Betty) and The Gray Hulk shared an evening during Peter David's run on the series.

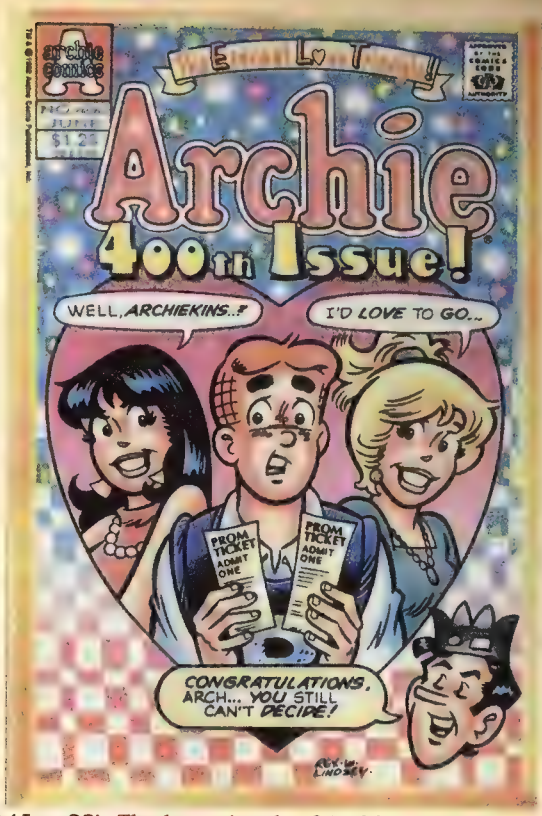
Orig. price: $1 Current NM price: $5.25

SUPERMAN'S
ACTION COMICS
NO 484
JUNE
35¢
IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF ACTION, SUPERMAN DID THIS ASTOUNDING FEAT...
NOW, IN THIS EXTRA-LENGTH ANNIVERSARY STORY, HE PERFORMS HIS MOST SENSATIONAL FEAT!
SUPERMAN TAKES A WIFE!

Action Comics #484 © 1978 DC Comics. Cover by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Action Comics* #484 (Jun 78).** To mark The Man of Steel's 40th anniversary, DC engaged in a bit of a cheat. (It was the *Earth-2* Superman and Lois who tied the knot.)

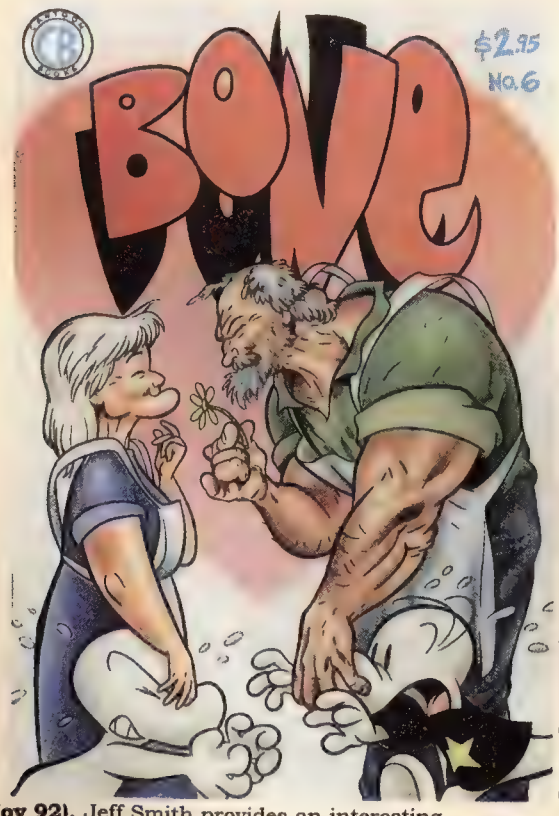
Orig. price: 35¢ Current NM price: $8



Archie #400 © 1992 Archie Comic Publications, Inc. Cover by Rex W. Lindsey. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Archie* #400 (Jun 92).** The love triangle of Archie, Betty, and Veronica has been a recurring theme, almost from the Riverdale teen's earliest appearance.

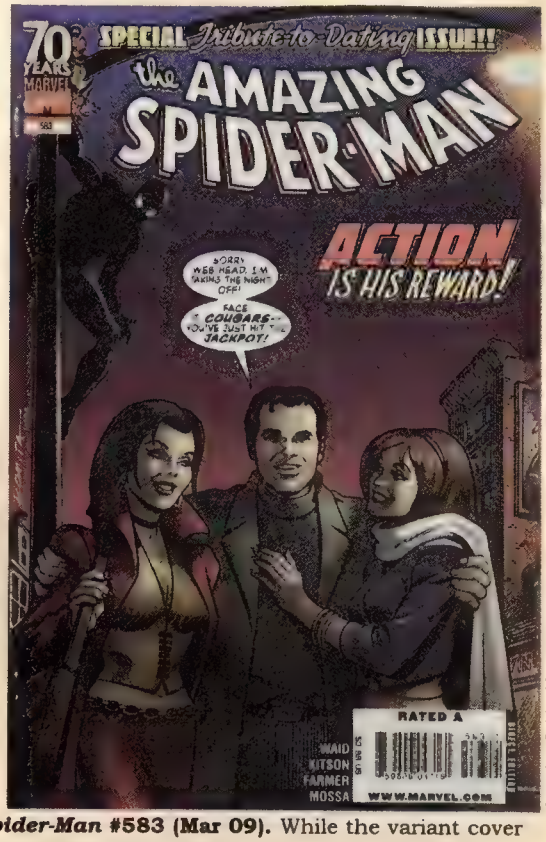
Orig. price: $1.25 Current NM price: $3



Bone #6 © 1992 Jeff Smith. Cover by Smith. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Bone* #6 (Nov 92).** Jeff Smith provides an interesting juxtaposition of emotions on this cover from early in the award-winning series.

Orig. price: $2.95 Current NM price: $7



Amazing Spider-Man #583 © 2009 Marvel Characters, Inc. Cover art by John Romita. Scan courtesy of Brent Frankenhoff.

***Amazing Spider-Man* #583 (Mar 09).** While the variant cover with newly elected President Barack Obama was reprinted numerous times, this John Romita cover shows that even hard-luck Peter Parker can enjoy a night out once in a while.

Orig. price: $3.99 Current NM price: $30

THE FAN/PRO BILL OF RIGHTS
PART TWO

by **PETER DAVID**

Editors' note: Continued from CBG #1686.

RIGHT THE SECOND

Fans have a right to wear and/or carry whatever they want to a convention. But one Fan's right to personal expression ends at another Fan's right to personal space.

Fans must be aware when accoutrements widen the amount of space they take up, either side-to-side or front to back. Attendees have a right to walk around a convention without being struck by: backpacks; rolling suitcases; wings; shoulder pads; swords, shields, scabbards, bows, giant keys, quivers, bat'leths, batarangs, or any other type of weapon or weapon container; capes; gigantic signs; or any other object that can inflict pain or injury if the wearer/bearer turns around too quickly.

Fans and Pros have a right to walk through convention space without being impeded by other attendees who are either taking photographs or posing for photographs. Quick photographs taken out of main traffic paths of either Fans with Pros or Fans in costume are not bothersome, as long as they do not block traffic. However, large numbers of costumed individuals posing for a battery of photographers poses a traffic hazard. It's a convention, not the red carpet at the Oscars.

Should such blockages occur, Fans and Pros desiring to get from Point A to Point B should have the right of way and be able to walk directly through the picture-taking area without feeling guilty about ruining other people's pictures. When passing Fans walk in front of people's cameras, such entries into the picture should, if possible, be accompanied by some manner of warning such as, "Excuse me." "Coming through." "Fore." If photographers aren't courteous enough to concern themselves about Fans and/or Pros getting where they need to go, then Fans and/or Pros shouldn't have to worry about the photographers getting their pictures of five slave Leias and a Wookiee.

A designated photo area is available at the Marvel booth at Comic-Con International: San Diego. In 2009, Stan Lee (right) had a photo op with The White Queen.

Fans have a right not to play along. Everyone appreciates dedication to one's character; nevertheless, you don't get a free pass to act a jerk just because you're cosplaying a Klingon or Lobo.

RIGHT THE THIRD

Pros have as much right to enjoy conventions as anyone else. Pros are typically referred to as "guests," and even "guests of honor." If you treat guests in an insensitive manner, they will stop coming to your house.

Pros have the right to attend panels as audience members, walk the dealers' room, or in other ways enjoy the convention without being approached with questions or requests for autographs. Fans who make such approaches do so at their own risk. Pros should make their best efforts to extend such extra courtesies when possible but should not be subjected to subsequent Fan excoriation if they choose to demur. (***Example:*** *"He refused to sign my program book even though he was just standing there doing nothing."*)

As corollary to the above paragraph, the one situation where ***under no circumstance*** can Pros be approached is when attending to bodily functions. **Toilets are to be considered off-limits for purposes of Fan-Pro interaction.** Do not ever try to hand something to someone to sign while they are peeing. Do not push a comic book under a stall door because you know they are in there and can't get away. Do not decide that a toilet is the best possible place for a photograph with or of your favorite creator. Just ... don't.

Pros have as much right to privacy as anyone else. Under no circumstance should Fans hover near, spy on, or eavesdrop upon private conversations that Pros are having with each other in a corner somewhere or while walking along a hallway. Such behavior would be considered rude, if it were done with total strangers, much less respected guests; fishing for dirt or leaks about upcoming work is bad form.

If an author is sitting around in a bar and you wish to approach him, you should offer to buy him a drink. This is particularly applicable with guests from the U.K. and/or Ireland. The technical term for this is "a bribe." With conventions *in* the U.K. or Ireland, the technical term for sitting around in a bar and buying authors drinks is "a panel."

Some Pros, because they have no one to watch their Artists Alley or exhibition table, will choose to eat at their table rather than go out to lunch. They have the right to this personal time without intrusion. Just because a Fan says, "I don't want to interrupt you," before he drops 10 books in front of the Pro does not make it any less an interruption. Furthermore, the Pro's hands may not be clean, which could result in anything from crumbs to mayo stains getting on material to be autographed — which no one will be happy about.

Authors are not your bitches (aka *The Neil Gaiman Assertion*).

Actors are not your performing monkeys (aka *The Misha Collins Declaration*).

RIGHT THE FOURTH

Fans and Pros have the right to enjoy panels.

Fans and/or convention organizers should reasonably assume they have the right to film or video-record panels unless explicit notice is provided at the beginning of the panel that visual recording is forbidden or a blanket prohibition is published in the program book by the convention.

If a Fan is so exhausted that he might fall asleep,

he should be seated toward the back of the room, not the front row, where his sonorous snoring and trickle of drool down his chin provide both audible and visual distractions. If a Pro is likewise exhausted, he should beg off being on the panel. Should anyone choose to ignore this advice, the strategic and retaliatory use of air horns by either panelists or Fans, while not encouraged, shall be excused. Should air horns be employed, said usage is not to be filmed and put up on Youtube unless it's really, really funny.

Cell phones should be shut off or set to vibrate during panels. If a Fan forgets and his phone rings, people are allowed to voice loud annoyance. If a panelist forgets and *his* cell phone goes off while he's on the panel, loud annoyance is ***not*** permitted. However laughter, snarking, and a *Simpson-esque* "Ha ha!" are not only acceptable but also encouraged.

Question-and-answer sessions are designed for *succinctly phrased* questions that will, in turn, elicit answers. They are not intended for Fan pontifications, declamations, circumlocution, or soliloquies. They are not intended for Fans to try to bond with the panelists or show them how special the questioners are. They are not intended to be preceded by a lengthy preamble that explains how the Fan's entire existence and the fates conspired to bring him to this particular point at this particular time to pose this particular question. This is a panel, not *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Fans choosing to ignore these guidelines proceed at their own risk and better hope their personal narrative is compelling enough that audiences will not find it onerous.

Audiences have a right to boo or bemoan the following questions: "Can I have a hug?" "Can I have a kiss?" "Can I have my picture taken with you?" "How *you* doin'?" (or any similar come-on or question involving asking for a date.)

If there are certain topics or works that are known to be provocative subjects, do not bring it up anyway just to get a reaction or show that you're fearless. If you poke the bear, don't be surprised if you get the claws (aka *The Ellison Exacerbation*). Should a novice Fan who poses such a question happen to be ignorant of its provocative nature, he will likely be tipped off by the collective gasp of the audience and the scowl from the Pro. In this event, he has the right to withdraw the question, no harm, no foul.

We asked Sergio Aragonés and Jeff Smith for this photo set-up at Comic-Con and then quickly let them get back to their business.

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Good rule of thumb: If a question sounds like something that would be asked by the main Fan geek from *Galaxy Quest,* avoid asking it. If you *must* posit technical questions, particularly those involving contradictions, save them for writers. Actors have the right to not be their characters and they do not generally have responses for picayune errata, especially since James Doohan passed away.

Attendees should not have to put up with redundancy. If you are a latecomer, quietly inquire of people near you if your intended question has already been addressed.

Pros have a right to express unpopular or inflammatory opinions on panels or elsewhere without its immediately resulting in fans announcing that henceforth they will never read anything by that author ever again. Pros also have a right to believe monkeys will fly out of their butts.

Fans in costume can even be asked to participate in panels as a young San Diego attendee was allowed to sit on one of the Marvel panels. DC and other publishers also have rewarded well-done costumes with additional recognition.

Fans with children have as much right to enjoy panels as anyone else. Fans without children have a right to enjoy panels without children crying or disrupting them. Pros have a right to express themselves freely without concern as to language or subject matter. Children have a right to be immersed in the conventional culture, since they are the future of fandom. Everyone has a right not to have their feet run over by strollers. In instances where any and/or all of these rights conflict, the Tim Gunn rule applies: Make it work.

RIGHT THE FIFTH

Convention-related rights stem from solid organization, and, therefore, convention organizers have certain expectations that they should meet.

Fans have a right to an efficient registration procedure.

Fans have a right to a central information booth, staffed by people who actually either have the answers or can find them quickly.

Attendees have the right to be able to read, with no effort, the badges of other attendees. Appropriate place for badges to be worn is either around the neck on a lanyard or in the upper left or right of one's shirt. Do not place your badge at hip level. No one needs or wants to be made uncomfortable staring at your crotch.

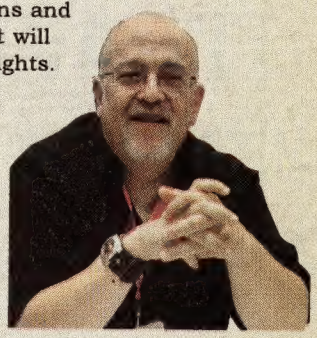
Attendees have a right to expect that convention organizers will heed the Maximum Occupancy signs and not endanger the attendees by overselling the convention. Rarely does anyone cosplay a Fire Marshal; if you see one, chances are he's real and you're in trouble. Nobody needs this grief.

Guest Pros being sponsored by the convention have a right to written confirmation of all terms of their convention attendance at least 90 days before the convention, with travel arrangements finalized no later than 30 days prior. Travel in such instances should never be the expense of the Pro with subsequent expectation of reimbursement unless the pro agrees to this — in which case, the Pro better be damned sure the organizer is good for it, because otherwise he's on his own.

Fans in wheelchairs or similar devices for locomotion have a right to proper accommodations for their personal needs, such as sufficient aisle width. They also have the right: not to have people cut in front of them in line; not to have items they're considering buying grabbed out of their hands; not to be assumed to be mentally challenged. (When you get down to it, all Fans have these rights, but those in wheelchairs appear to be victimized by those who ignore those rights more often.) Non-ambulatory Fans should also be given preferential treatment for elevators, since stairs are not an option.

Conventions should take security measures and have people designated specifically to handle disruptive individuals, crowd control, *etc.*, as well as an advertised security ombudsmen to whom Fans can go if situations of harassment arise. Should the convention opt for security forces composed of local groups of Storm Troopers, Dorsai, Klingons, *etc.*, it should be emphasized to them that they are there for the convenience and safety of the Fans, not to cosplay as bad-asses. Security guards should be able to distinguish between groups of Fans blocking access, as opposed to a single fan who is simply standing still for a minute or two deciding which direction he's going to go.

The foregoing represents the best efforts of a particular group of individuals to enumerate the rights of Fans and guidelines for behavior that will ensure and protect those rights. So say we all.



PETER DAVID, can be written to at P.O. Box 239, Bayport, NY 11705, or visited at ***www.peter david.net***. His book, ***Writing for Comics and Graphic Novels with Peter David***, is available from F+W's Impact imprint at ***www.impact-books.com***. "But I Digress" is © 2011 Second Age, Inc.

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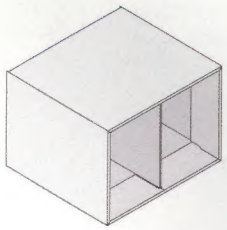

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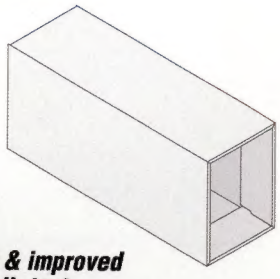
XLC300 sold separately (see above).

Stack 4 high!



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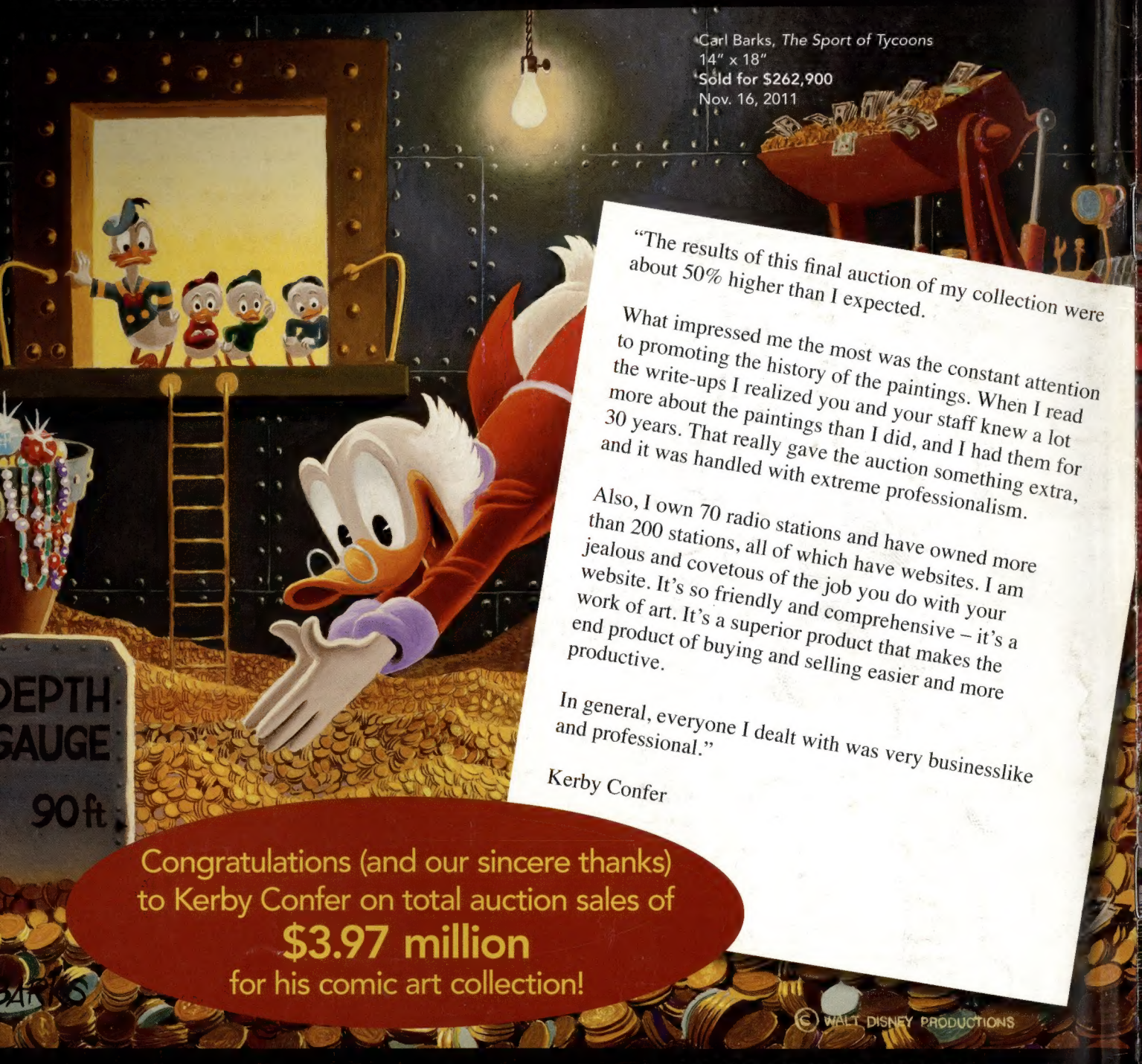

Carl Barks, *The Sport of Tycoons*
14" x 18"
Sold for $262,900
Nov. 16, 2011

"The results of this final auction of my collection were about 50% higher than I expected.

What impressed me the most was the constant attention to promoting the history of the paintings. When I read the write-ups I realized you and your staff knew a lot more about the paintings than I did, and I had them for 30 years. That really gave the auction something extra, and it was handled with extreme professionalism.

Also, I own 70 radio stations and have owned more than 200 stations, all of which have websites. I am jealous and covetous of the job you do with your website. It's so friendly and comprehensive – it's a work of art. It's a superior product that makes the end product of buying and selling easier and more productive.

In general, everyone I dealt with was very businesslike and professional."

Kerby Confer

Congratulations (and our sincere thanks) to Kerby Confer on total auction sales of $3.97 million for his comic art collection!

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